

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

FEBRUARY ISSUE 2010
100% Australian Content

**OVER 67
GAMES INSIDE!**

a stack of brand-new 2010
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Crime 3, Batman:
Arkham Asylum 2**
and many more!

**SHOWTIME!
GAME
OF THE
YEAR**
The winners
unveiled!

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MEDAL OF HONOR

FIRST LOOK: Move over Modern Warfare,
the War on Terror has a new recruit!

DISSECTED!

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Everything you need to know
about taking TV to your PS3!

ISSUE 40 FEBRUARY 2010
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HANDS-ON

HEAVY RAIN

A downpour of details:
the first few hours!

EXPOSED!

FINAL FANTASY XIII

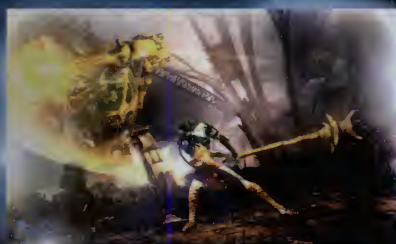
We've played it! Expert first
impressions, direct from Japan!

MODERN WARFARE 2: MORE KILLER HINTS, TIPS AND TRICKS TO RULE ONLINE!



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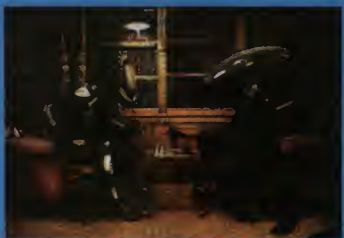


PS3

PlayStation 3



SONY
make.believe



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Blood, sweat and beards!



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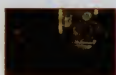
Classics unearthed!



ROCK BAND 2

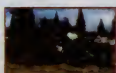
Australia, we're getting the band back together. Review on page 72

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70 THE SABOTEUR

Sean Devlin, a fake guy based on a real guy, tears around Paris, killing Nazis.



72 MX VS. ATV REFLEX

What's better: two wheels or four? Settle the score in this mud-making slide-fest!



72 ROCK BAND 2

Is this the best music game to hit the PS3 since *Rock Band*?



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74 SCENE IT?

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75 ASSASSIN'S CREED

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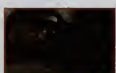
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Step into the shoes of Sir Alex in this portable football management game.



76 PIXELJUNK SHOOTER

Can the PS3 afford another twin-stick blaster, or has *Shooter* shot itself?



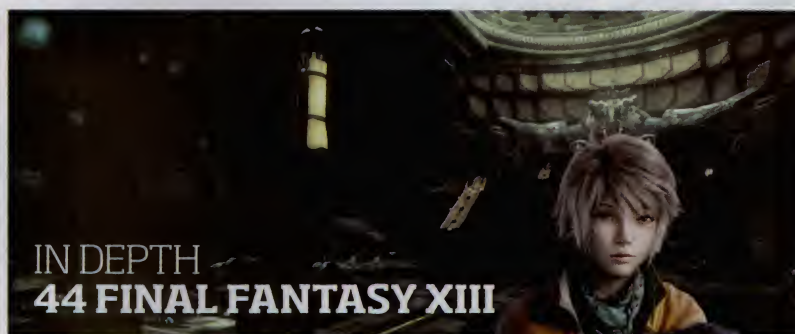
77 CALL OF DUTY CLASSIC

See where the series started in this HD remake of the PC classic.



77 HUSTLE KINGS

Pool, on your PS3, minus the scummy, ripped felt and annoying, fastidious bar-flies.



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Get ready to die a thousand deaths – well, 256 – in this massively multiplayer shooter.

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Could this be the PS3's prettiest game? Check out our hands-on coverage!

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43 YAKUZA 3

This might be the best action game series you've never played – and it's coming to Australia!

INCOMING 43 YAKUZA 3



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10x

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EA:
taking on
the *Modern Warfare* machine
**MEDAL OF
HONOR**
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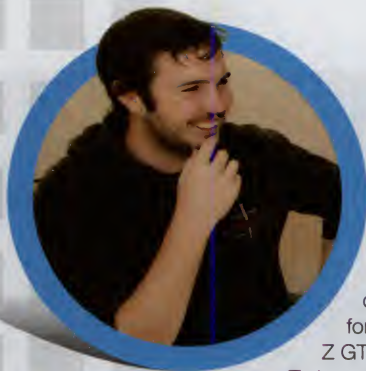
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WELCOME!

It was 1:30AM when I pulled the plug on my efforts with the *Gran Turismo 5* time trial.

Nobody is up at 1:30AM on a Wednesday morning except 24-hour petrol station attendants and vampires. You can play this now, and probably already are. The potential prize for one of you guys is the chance to actually drive the Nissan 370 Z GT4 for the RJN Motorsport Team in Europe. The fastest 20 *Gran Turismo* drivers from each territory will face each other in live national finals events after the contest closes January 24, and a total of 19 winners will emerge to attend the GT Academy at Silverstone, UK. It's an incredible and very, very rare opportunity to do something special.

The Aussie press got the demo a few days early to compete amongst ourselves. The potential prize for us? Pride. I scraped, dented, into second place. It proves unless you're Michael Phelps there really is always somebody better than you at everything.

But while I was playing it, shaving fractions of a second from each consecutive lap, I rediscovered a spark I thought had long since faded. I was in the zone, completely focused on the task at hand. It was all that mattered. I didn't take home the gravy but it was a welcome reminder why I play videogames in the first place.

It's a challenge.

LUKE REILLY EDITOR

PSN: Capt_Flashheart **PLAYING:** THE SABOTEUR
WANTING: GRAN TURISMO 5

OPS ON: CHALLENGES



STEPHANIE GOH

Once I was in Malaysia, and a restaurant had a challenge to eat a two kilo steak. Pro tip: avoid bread, pace yourself. Cows turned their heads when I walked down the street.

PSN: TBA
Playing: The Saboteur
Wanting: Final Fantasy XIII



PAUL TAYLOR

When I was a kid, some friends challenged a guy to eat a whole stick of Uhu glue for \$20. He did it, and was very, very ill. Took home the lobster and a weird kind of respect.

PSN: paulgusta
Playing: Borderlands
Wanting: Final Fantasy XIII



JAMES COTTEE

Every day brings a new challenge, as without fresh stimulation your brain turns into the equivalent of globally warmed, bleached reef coral. That's why games are awesome.

PSN: DrWho3987
Playing: The Saboteur
Wanting: Bioshock 2



ADAM MATHEW

Do you want a memorable challenge that will transform you as a person? Get onto Google. Type in *Don't Shit Your Pants*. Play the game. Be amazed. Apply the skills to real-life.

PSN: YourmumsAWESOME
Playing: Darksiders
Wanting: Medal of Honor

EDITORIAL & DESIGN

EDITOR

Luke Reilly

DEPUTY EDITOR

Paul Taylor

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Adam Mathew

CONTRIBUTORS

James Ellis, James Cottee, Anthony O'Connor, Toby McCasker, Dylan Burns, Amy Flower, David Kozicki, Chris Stead

ART DIRECTOR

Stephanie Goh

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Paul Cook

PUBLISHING & CIRCULATION

CIRCULATION ENQUIRIES

(02) 8305 6900

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Graham Hood

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

NATIONAL BUSINESS MANAGER

Nikki Turnbull

(02) 8305 6904

HOW TO CONTACT US

TEL (02) 8305 6900

FAX (02) 8305 6999

Official PlayStation Magazine

P.O. Box 1643

Bondi Junction NSW 1355

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MANAGEMENT

DIRECTOR

Jim Flynn

FINANCE DIRECTOR

Sandy Barnes

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT

Stuart Harle

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SHOUT OUTS: KJR :: Vinnie :: Nicole :: Luke Mathew :: Lucy :: Ma and Pa from the Highlands :: Hutch and his Cone of Shame :: Simao and his eagle eyes



Gaming's latest and greatest



ILLEGAL ALIENS?

Aliens vs Predator: Not suitable for Australians

Sega's upcoming sci-fi splatterfest *Aliens vs Predator* has been refused classification in Australia, had the decision appealed and subsequently re-rated MA15+ - all inside of one week.

Aliens vs Predator was initially banned for showing close-ups of humans experiencing "explicit decapitation and dismemberment" and "stabbing through the chest, throat, mouth or eyes," according to a copy of the Classification Board's report.

Similar actions are depicted in the movie series that inspired the game, although none of the films are rated above MA15+. Previous *Aliens vs Predator* games from a variety of other developers and publishers have been rated M and MA15+.

Developer Rebellion was unhappy with the initial decision but remained staunch in an official statement, refusing to modify it for a local release.

"Rebellion is disappointed that its upcoming title *Aliens vs Predator* has

been banned in Australia. However, as we understand the law in that country the authorities had no choice as we agree strongly that our game is not suitable for game players who are not adults," the company said.

"The content of *AVP* is based on some of the most innovative and iconic horror movies, and as such we wanted to create a title that was true to the source material. It is for adults, and it is bloody and frightening, that was our intent. We will not be releasing a sanitised or cut down version for territories where adults are not considered by their governments to be able to make their own entertainment choices."

Sega, the publisher of *Aliens vs Predator*, said it "will continue to investigate all options available to us, including the possibility of appeal".

South Australian Attorney-General Michael Atkinson - the most vocal opponent to the introduction of an R18+ rating for videogames - defended the decision to initially refuse classification to the game. This came despite recently stating during

a Radio National interview "I have no trust in the Classification Board to apply the guidelines sincerely." The fact that it has now been classified MA15+ uncut may have him feeling that way again.

Speaking to ABC News, Atkinson took the opportunity to make it clear he's happy Australia is the only developed country in the world that has no adult category for videogames and bans games that exceed the MA15+ rating.

"This is a question of a small number of very zealous gamers trying to impose their will on society. And I think harm society. It's the public interest versus the small vested interest," he said.

This comment comes just weeks after Atkinson, in a letter to a critic, reiterated he "will continue to campaign against the introduction of an R18+ rating for computer games."

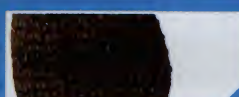
Comments like this should draw ire from Australian gamers, who are equally likely to regard Atkinson as the over-zealous party trying to



15 WHERE TO NOW?
We take a look into the future of *Assassin's Creed*



18 AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3
The events that shaped the games.



22 ANGRY SACKBOY
We can see little sack veins popping out of his forehead.

impose his will on society in this debate.

We spoke to iGEA (Interactive Games and Entertainment Association) CEO Ron Curry, who had his own thoughts on this statement.

"Yeah, I think it just speaks to the continual misinformation that we seem to be getting from Atkinson," said Curry. "Most of his comments tend to be inflammatory, moral-panic and not necessarily based in fact."

Atkinson's beliefs regarding the public interest are also at odds with the Interactive Australia 2009 Survey that indicated 91 per cent of gamers and non-gamers believe an R18+ rating or videogames should be introduced.

"I accept that 98 per cent, 99 per cent of gamers will tell the difference between fantasy and reality, but the 1 per cent to 2 per cent could go on to be motivated by these games to commit horrible acts of violence," he added.

It's important to note these figures are unsupported. A meta-analysis by University of Toronto psychologist Jonathan

Freedman (author of *Media Violence and Its Effect on Aggression*) of over 200 published studies found that the

"vast and overwhelming majority" did not find a causal link between video game usage and violent activity.

Curry expressed his frustration to us regarding Atkinson's statistics.

"Yeah, I don't know where we get the one or two per cent," said Curry. "If we assume that 68 per cent of Australians play videogames - I don't know how many million that is, but one or two per cent of that has to be [up to a few hundred thousand people], whatever the math is."

"But you don't see that many people out there creating heinous crimes, copycat killings, executions and beheadings from videogames. I'm just not sure where he gets that data point from. His comments, his perceptions, are insubstantial. He has no proof. Nothing's based on research or logic."

So, what's the next step?

"The very next step is the launch of the R18+ discussion paper," said Curry. "That's what we're working on now and trying to drive government to get that paper out."

The paper was released just hours after our chat with Curry. See **SPEAK UP!** for details.

SPEAK UP!

The long-promised discussion paper on the proposed R18+ classification for videogames in Australia has finally been released. The paper, which was released by Minister for Home Affairs Brendan O'Connor, marks the beginning of a public consultation process that will run until February 28, 2010.

Ron Curry believes the industry is pleased to have a forum for the arguments to be formally heard and says the paper is well constructed and positions both sides of the argument fairly.

"We've had the unusual situation that the debate was initially stifled by South Australian Attorney General Michael Atkinson, who has been a long standing opponent to this classification," said Curry.

"We are pleased that the Commonwealth has decided to champion the issue and has agreed to move forward with a formal and structured public consultation process."

"We will be calling on Mr Atkinson to genuinely consider the range of views that are expressed over the next two months and reconsider his position on the matter."

With 91 per cent of gamers and non-gamers believing the classification should be introduced, it should be quite the reality check for our representatives.

Log onto www.ag.gov.au/gamesclassification for the discussion paper and submission template. Follow the instructions and make a mature and genuine submission immediately, either by post, fax or email. Make sure you encourage your family and friends to do so also.

WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



The R18+ debate

We're all getting fired up over this.



Play TV

Seinfeld, waiting patiently for when we get in.



Whiskey censorship

The good ol' boys are at a dry bar.



Christmas holidays

Prawns, roasts, pudding and chocolate.



Super Potato

In the middle of Akihabara, Tokyo, is this wonderland.



Bayonetta

We hate to see you go, but we love to watch you leave



Rogue Warrior

It's a pity your end credits are better than the four hours before them.

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

Tired of Oberstgruppenführer Atkinson and the Australian classification system deciding what you're not allowed to see? Well, the PS3 is region-free for games; you *could* import them. We always prefer to support the local publishers and retailers, but in some cases this would be your only option. Thing is, you'll need to be willing to bend the law. According to Customs it's not permitted to import material that's been Refused Classification (although for the average Australian - except Western Australians - it is not illegal to *possess* games that have been refused classification assuming you don't intend to sell it or demonstrate it in a public place). However, they do say a law you don't enforce is hardly a law at all - and we've never heard first-hand of any parcels being seized by Customs. They're probably searching for drugs and stuff that's worth finding. Have you? Let us know.

IN SHORT...



Forbes National Editor Michael O'Zanian believes that EA will drop Tiger Woods "regardless of what they are saying now." EA has denied this, stating its strong relationship with Woods remains.



Activision has counter-sued No Doubt regarding *Band Hero*, claiming No Doubt was in breach of a contract between the two parties, and had reaped unjust enrichment as a result.



A Metacritic round-up of the top games of 2009 indicates *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* was the best wide-reviewed game of the year, across all platforms, even beating *Modern Warfare 2* for top spot.

NEWS

2010: THE YEAR OF MOTION CONTROL AND THE PSN

Why you have the best console available

John Koller, head of marketing for PlayStation in the US, spoke to GamePro.com about 3D gaming, motion control and PS2 backwards compatibility. "The Holy Grail of gaming is placing you as a consumer into the game physically," he said. "When we provide further details, people will see exactly where we're going, not only from a technological standpoint on the hardware, but also where the gameplay is transitioning." Koller said that the titles most likely to benefit from the technology are shooters, sports and family games, "because they're areas that quite honestly, I think Project Natal and the Wii are going to have trouble matching, from a differentiation standpoint."

2010 will also see the PlayStation Network being implemented as more of a "pillar", providing "a number of very critically demanded features, and also continue to look for ways to expand on what the PS3 consumer has asked for." However, PS2 backwards compatibility looks like it isn't an issue for Sony to seriously consider.

"We're at a point now in the cycle of the PlayStation 3 that there's... so many strong PS3 games, that it's really become far less of an issue than I think a lot of people – particularly the media – are asking about. In all of our studies, we've noticed that it's fallen off the map in terms of demand."

This could be because the PS2 is still kicking, 10 years after being launched – an astounding achievement for a console – and titles are still being released for it. And, really, the future is all about new games. On that front, Koller is confident.

"Because of the strong sales we're seeing right now on the PS3, we're getting more investments and development from third-parties and first-party groups," Koller said. "The future is really bright for the type, quantity, and quality of games that are going to be coming to the PlayStation 3 in the next few years."

SCREENTEST: Your favourite games as movies

DEAD SPACE

Suit up.

The Director
Martin Scorsese

The Plot
Set in the 26th Century, Isaac Clarke, an engineer, is sent to investigate an SOS signal emitting from the mining vessel USG Ishimura. As Clarke and his fellow crewmates land onboard the eerily quiet Ishimura, undead beings – Necromorphs – attack, crippling their craft. Clarke's girlfriend is also somewhere on the plagued ship that is floating closer and closer to a deadly asteroid belt.

The Pitch
Aliens meets *2001*. With crude mining lasers instead of guns.

Green Light or Development Hell?

This was a massive success for EA: there's a sequel coming, and there's also a Wii-only title that provides ample room for a movie prequel. Nothing says 'green light this sucker and make some money' more than the imagined sound of a money fight

in EA's offices. It's stunningly paced, set in space, and looks like a million bucks even before Hollywood gets its mitts on it.

Best Line:
Nicole Brennan: "Isaac, make us whole again."

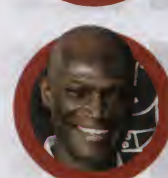
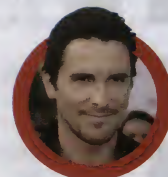
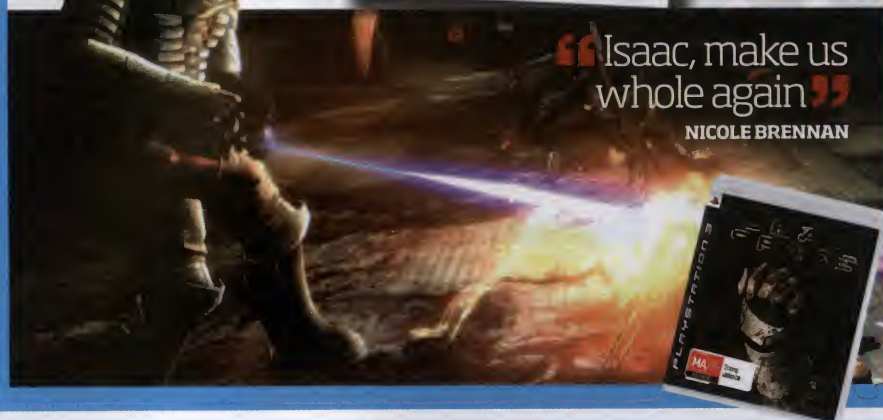
The Cast:
Christian Bale as the strong and silent Isaac Clarke.

Tonantzin Carmelo as the team's technologist, Kendra Daniels

Peter Mensah as the suspicious Zach Hammond.

Navid Negahban as dude with bad intentions, Dr. Challus Mercer.

Iyari Limon as Clarke's damsel in distress, Nicole Brennan



NUMBER CRUNCHING

1.3m

The number of copies of *Final Fantasy XIII* shipped for its launch week in Japan



SEPARATED AT BIRTH

NO. 12 George Michael – Iron Fister Paul Phoenix

Physical characteristics aside – designer stubble, a hairstyle that requires industrial amounts of product and hours with a hair dryer – both could sing 'Faith' without a shred of irony. Michael's intention would be more benevolent, while Phoenix would want to touch your body with his shoulder charge and mammoth feet.

TOP 10

CELEBRITIES WHO SHOULD HAVE VIDEOGAMES

Famous people. They sell movie tickets, help shift products off store shelves and into your homes, and they're making their way into video games. Here's a bunch more in games that ought to keep your PS3 on, if they ever happened.



GARY BUSEY

A third-person action game where you rarely get into a physical altercation, but instead spray inventive insults at your foes and friendly NPCs to make them do what you want. If you don't perform to Busey's standards, he'll refuse to do what you want him to do, and won't let you quit or turn off your PS3. A taskmaster.



MICHAEL RICHARDS

This would mostly be about Kramer, a platformer in the vein of the 1991 classic *Bart vs The Space Mutants*, or even Jacko's *Moonwalker*, where the main character gets in to all sorts of kooky hijinks. A bonus stage would put you on stage in a series of QTEs trying to avoid making a racist joke.



WOODY HARRELSON

A game focused purely on co-op. In particular, comedy co-op, with Wesley Snipes as the other guy in the duo. Think *Army Of Two*, but split between shooting hoops and robbing trains, taking Harrelson and Snipes through a witty journey where the joy lies in the repertoire.



SAM WORTHINGTON

This would be epic, taking up possibly 20 Blu-ray discs. Consider it a *Metal Gear*-esque title where Wortho sneaks in to Hollywood and then takes it over from the inside, with support coming from his clearly outstanding agent. Since he's Aussie, his easy-going charm replaces cardboard boxes.



KRISTEN BELL

We really don't know what type of game Kristen Bell would be in – for argument's sake, stick her in a point and click adventure – but it doesn't matter as she'd just be awesome to watch. We put her in everything. Whoever makes this needs to throw most of their budget into animation and textures.



SIGOURNEY WEAVER

So you're looking for a strong, independent female role model? Sigourney's your gal. She's played a ton of the silver-screen's most enduring heroines, and we suspect would make for an awesome videogame leading lady. Something where she's running around, shooting stuff. That always pulls a crowd.



DAVE GROHL

There needs to be more than one game about Grohl. Consider a *Rock Band* pack purely about Grohl and the Foo's. Then, a platformer where guitar riffs and drum solos enable special powers. Follow it up with Grohl starring in the sequel to *Brütal Legend*. Don't tell us it wouldn't be awesome.



STEVEN SEAGAL

All we have is the following title: 'Death by Justice'. Seagal plays John Justice, an ex-cop (did you know he IS a cop? Right now? We're serious) who specialises in aikido and has an energy drink business that is being taken over by 'Pispi Cola'. Somehow his ponytail would be involved, perhaps in its own bonus levels.



DAVE CHAPPELLE

Less of a game, per se, and more of a series of interactive movies involving a string of quick time events that take advantage of Chappelle's stunning wit and drawling delivery. Gather material for a gig by meeting the right people, both in present day and flashbacks, get on stage and watch the magic roll.

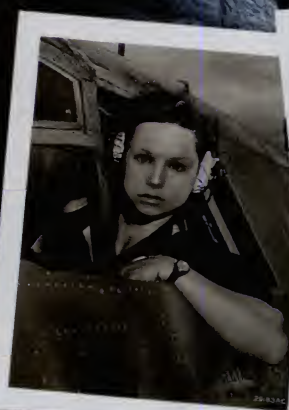


KEITH DAVID

You may know him as the captain in *Crash* and also as Sgt. Foley in *Modern Warfare 2*. You'll also know he has a magic voice that would make a phonebook sound epic. We propose that Keith David stars in his own voice acting fighting game, with Nolan North as the main antagonist.

WHERE TO NOW?

At some point, Desmond Miles' murderous ancestor's make their way from the east side of the Atlantic Ocean to the States. But when? Jump in to the *OPS Animus* for what might be



ASSASSIN'S CREED: WWII

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

WWII wasn't all just Sherman Tanks, Spitfires and jeeps. Spies constantly went back and forth across borders, and, in our fictional case, seas. This is an assassin as a double agent. A female double agent. Probably a sexy female double agent.

THE STORY

Bear with us. You're an English spy, captured by the Germans, trains with them to gain their trust, who then goes back to England, tells them of her situation, and feeds misinformation to the Axis. In the end she buggers off to the States, thus leading eventually to Desmond Miles.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

It's *Assassin's Creed*, so it couldn't be anything but a third-person action adventure. Tonnes of vehicles, loads of sneaking around, getting dangerously close to Hitler in a way no-one wants to get close to him. Bonuses for retrieving Nazi gold

PROBABILITY

Ubi has mentioned the possibility of a female assassin in the past, so it's totally plausible. Plus, if she looked like Kristen Bell, then sales are assured.



ASSASSIN'S CREED: VICTORIAN ERA

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

At some point in the series, royalty has to be embroiled. *Has to*. Why? Because Kings and Queens used to go out and fight themselves, but then, we suspect, employed lackeys to do their dirty work for them.

THE STORY

You are a trusted member of Queen Victoria's army, when Britain declares war on Russia in 1854. It's the Crimean War, a dirty blight on England's period of substantial growth when the country's population explodes. Our assassin would have to wear a suit.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

It's *Assassin's Creed*, so it couldn't be anything but a third-person action adventure. Plenty of horses to ride, cannons to fire, and a stunning uniform to wear. Plus, it's set in and around the hottest videogame location of the moment: Russia.

PROBABILITY

Queen Vic would be an interesting character to have in a videogame, and we're struggling to think of a recent game set in that time frame since... ever.



ASSASSIN'S CREED: FRENCH REVOLUTION

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

One of the most turbulent periods of history, this was the time period when an entire political structure transitioned from being an absolute monarchy to a republic. People were beheaded, and the grand nature is perfect fodder for videogames.

THE STORY

You are a member of the radical Jacobins, who are rebelling against the Girondins, a rival political faction. The monarchy has grown stagnant and it's time to flush them out, publicly. Subterfuge and sabotage are your tools – along with hidden blades. Expect to see Marie Antoinette.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

It's *Assassin's Creed*, so it couldn't be anything but a third-person action adventure. France has a glut of stunningly beautiful buildings with plenty of hand- and foot-holds to use in order to lop heads. It's a shame that they'd be slightly blood slicked.

PROBABILITY

The French Revolution is uncharted videogame territory. So was Acre and Jerusalem. We'd tip this more likely than not given enough time.



ASSASSIN'S CREED: MAYA

EXPLAIN YOURSELF

The Spanish conquistadors began obliterating Mayan forces from the late 1500s. Since the last game was in Italy, it's a hop skip and stab to Spain and a boat bound for South America across the Atlantic Ocean.

THE STORY

You are an ancestor of one of Ezio's illegitimate children, a Mayan, descended from one of the many Spaniards who tried to take over Yucatán. Then the Spanish finally get a mass of troops together that won't flee to Honduras or Veracruz and decide to take the city. You're fighting back.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

It's *Assassin's Creed*, so it couldn't be anything but a third-person action adventure. The Mayans were up there with the best builders in the world, so there'd be loads of structures to jump between and plenty of secret monuments with stone-based puzzles.

PROBABILITY

Zero. The Mayans were pretty much wiped out, so it's a dead end for this branch of the lineage. Still, it would make for an awesome side story or neat DLC.

DANTE'S INFERNO

This hellraising slasher in the *God of War* mould looks more and more impressive each passing day. Looking forward to descending into the depths? Us too.





ROUNDUP

Everything else you need to know

Dante's *Inferno* executive producer Jonathan Knight, speaking to G4, knows that EA will want a sequel to the game if it performs well but he's not sure that the follow up in *The Divine Comedy*, 'Purgatorio', will lend itself as well to a game. We'd be a little more concerned about part 3, 'Paradiso'. How do you make a game about the Nine Spheres of Heaven? How many giant nipple monsters do you think you'd find there? A couple. At most.

2K has announced a reboot of the forgettable PSone series *Spec Ops*. Developed by German studio Yager. *Spec Ops: The Line* was officially revealed during last month's Spike Video Game Awards. We didn't glean much from the Björk-backed footage, although it's a third-person, over-the-shoulder style shooter set in a mostly-destroyed Dubai. The city is covered in sand, which appears to shift and change parts of the environment without warning.

Speaking of sand, Ubisoft appears to have shelved the cel-shaded *Prince of Persia* do-over series in favour of a return to last generation's series. *Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands* will supplement *The Sands of Time* trilogy, and will be set between *The Sands of Time* and *Warrior Within*. Ubisoft is likely hoping to piggyback upon the upcoming Bruckheimer blockbuster adaptation.

Harmonix has revealed its next single-band music game: *Green Day: Rock Band*. Like *The Beatles: Rock Band*, *Green Day: Rock Band* will star the band themselves and their favourite locations, but unlike the Fab Four's title, the Green Day game will be exportable to the *Rock Band* platform. Like *LEGO Rock Band*, you'll be able to play the tracks in the core *Rock Band* games instead if you wish. It'll also be compatible with the 21st Century Breakdown tracks that have already been released on the Rock Store.

THQ has unsurprisingly revealed *UFC Undisputed 2010*. The first glimpse was short, but it did reveal the ability to use the sides of the octagon to your advantage, new styles and the fact Kimbo Slice is in it.

Deadliest Warrior, a TV show that "scientifically" matches up history's greatest fighters (viking vs samurai, anyone?) is being turned into a downloadable game

for release this year, although platforms are yet to be confirmed. The *Deadliest Warrior* reveal clip showed a knight battling a ninja in a forest. It didn't show who won, although the knight did cop a shuriken in the eye at one point. That probably would've been it for us.

Activision has pulled a swiftie and surprised us all with another instalment of the *True Crime* series. Interestingly it's being crafted by ModNation Racers developer United Front, not Luxoflux. *True Crime* (yes: just *True Crime* at this stage) is set in Hong Kong and keeps the undercover cop angle the series is known for. No word whether Christopher Walken has found his way into this one - he starred in the last two.

LucasArts has also revealed *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II*. The all-CG trailer revealed basically nothing, aside from the fact Starkiller appears to return as the lead. Here's hoping it improves on the commercially lucrative but ultimately flawed original.

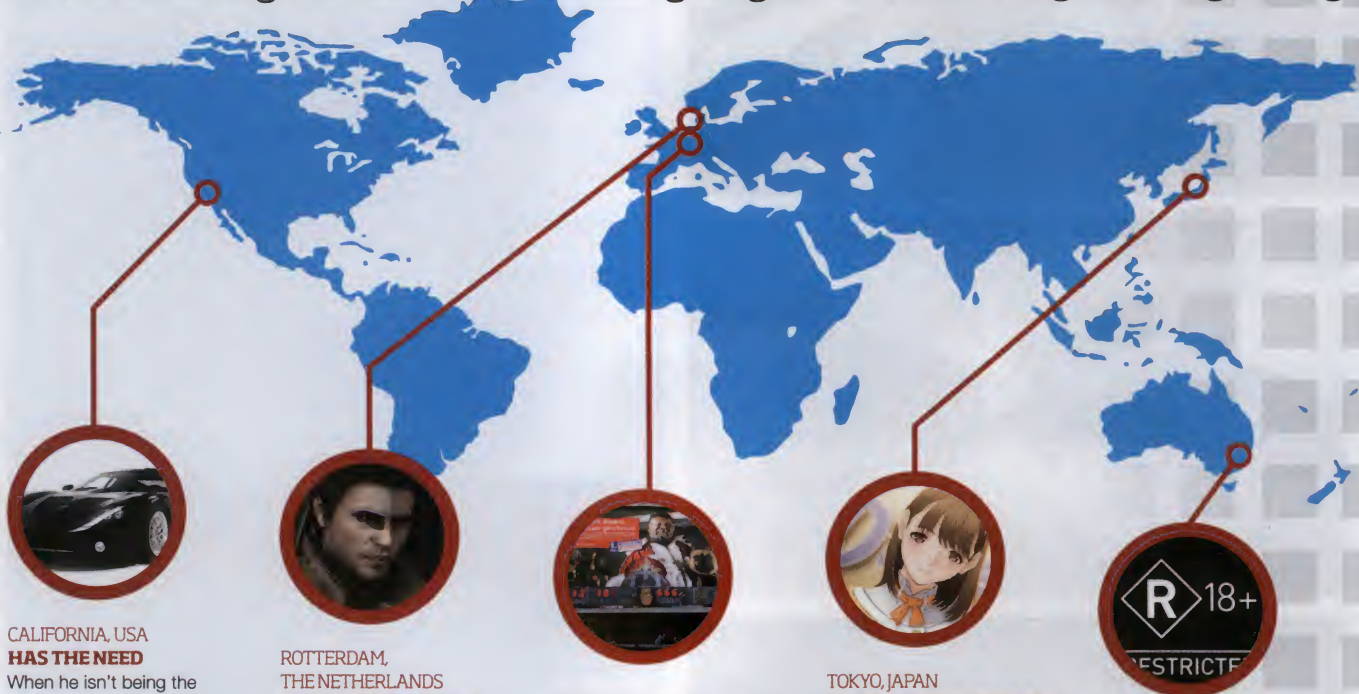
It's a long while off, but a teaser trailer for *Tron Evolution*, featuring some very neon footage of some very neon people battling and racing light cycles, has been revealed. We're guessing it'll be out around the film *Tron Legacy*.

It seems everyone's caught sequel fever, because Warner Bros. has also announced a follow-up to *Batman: Arkham Asylum*. The teaser for the as-yet-unnamed title features a very ill-looking Joker (who still has a sense of humour) and the ominous declaration that "Arkham has moved." Shots of a city in chaos point to a bigger and bolder Batman game than ever before. Hints in initial footage point to appearances by The Penguin and Catwoman. Rocksteady is once again at the helm.

505 Games has announced a new game from WET developer Artificial Mind and Movement, *Naughty Bear*. It's a violent action game starring a stuffed bear. Sounds like *Manhunt* with teddy bears.

AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



CALIFORNIA, USA HAS THE NEED

When he isn't being the Chief Creative Director at EA, Richard Hilleman also builds environmentally friendly supercars. The CMT-380, developed with Capstone Turbine Corporation, is a "high-performance supercar [that] definitely raises hybrid's cool factor on several levels." It goes from 0-100 in 3.9 seconds, and has a top speed of 240km/h. Expect it in the next *Need for Speed*, surely?

ROTTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS PYRAMID HEAD-CASE

A 35-year-old man, Jan H., broke into the basement of the Sophia Hospital in Rotterdam and turned off the power, believing he was solving an elaborate puzzle in Konami's *Silent Hill* game. Found not guilty in a trial, as the court ruled he had, "no idea of the true consequences of his deed." We really hope we never lose it this bad.

BERLIN, GERMANY DOOMED ADS

A group of artists has 're-designed' a few billboards on the streets of Berlin, by applying the HUD of legendary shooter *Doom* on top of them. Each one in the trio has a slightly different facial expression of the nameless space marine as he battles two women, Santa and a boxer dog.

TOKYO, JAPAN HAVE AND TO HANDHELD

Another person has married a videogame character. The man, known by his online name SAL9000, married Nene Aneagaski from DS game, *Love Plus*. The 'couple' broadcast their marriage online, and have since gone on a honeymoon to Guam. "Since I was calling [Nene my wife], I thought we'd just have to get married then", said SAL9000.

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA R18+ +1

The Federal Government has released a discussion paper to bring the issue of an R18+ rating in to the public focus. It asks members of the public to send in a submission, either supporting or opposing such a move. For more on this important topic, check out page 10.

INTERNATIONAL CHARTS



UK

Source: ELSPA

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Assassin's Creed II | Ubisoft |
| 2 | Modern Warfare 2 | Activision |
| 3 | FIFA 10 | EA |
| 4 | Need for Speed SHIFT | EA |
| 5 | Uncharted 2: Among Thieves | Sony |
| 6 | WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2010 | THQ |
| 7 | Tekken 6 | Namco Bandai |
| 8 | Batman: Arkham Asylum | Eidos |
| 9 | Pro Evolution Soccer 2010 | Konami |
| 10 | LEGO Indiana Jones 2 | LucasArts |



JAPAN

Source: VGChartz

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | COD: Modern Warfare 2 | Activision |
| 2 | Assassin's Creed II | Ubisoft |
| 3 | Winning Eleven 2010 | Konami |
| 4 | COD4: Modern Warfare | Activision |
| 5 | Dragon Ball: RB | Namco Bandai |
| 6 | Need for Speed SHIFT | EA |
| 7 | Bayonetta | Sega |
| 8 | Tekken 6 | Namco Bandai |
| 9 | Uncharted: El Dorado no Hihou | Sony |
| 10 | inFamous: Akumei Takaki Otoko Sony | |



USA

Source: NPD

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Modern Warfare 2 | Activision |
| 2 | Assassin's Creed II | Ubisoft |
| 3 | Madden NFL 10 | EA |
| 4 | Uncharted 2: Among Thieves | Sony |
| 5 | God of War Collection | Sony |
| 6 | LittleBigPlanet | Sony |
| 7 | Valkyria Chronicles | Sega |
| 8 | Tekken 6 | Namco Bandai |
| 9 | R&C: A Crack in Time | Sony |
| 10 | Dragon Age: Origins | EA |

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you...

JANUARY 2010



Bayonetta
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA



Army of Two: The 40th Day
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



Dark Void
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ



Darksiders
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ



Vancouver 2010
GENRE: SPORTS
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA



Yakuza 3
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA



Final Fantasy XIII
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT



God of War III
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



Guitar Hero: Van Halen
GENRE: MUSIC
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



Castlevania: Lords of Shadow
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS



RAGE
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



Clash of the Titans
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS



R.U.S.E.
GENRE: RTS
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT



Singularity
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



Final Fantasy XIV
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: TBA



Agent
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR



Max Payne 3
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR



ModNation Racers
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

APRIL 2010



Red Dead Redemption
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR



Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA



Split/Second
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: MADMAN



ModNation Racers
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



MAG
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

FEBRUARY 2010



BioShock 2
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K



Dante's Inferno
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



Aliens Vs. Predator
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA



BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger
GENRE: FIGHTING
DISTRIBUTOR: AIE



MX vs ATV Reflex
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

TBC 2010



Gran Turismo 5
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



Mafia II
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K



Heavy Rain
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY



Arcania
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: AFA



Blur
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



Enslaved
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS



Alpha Protocol
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA



Just Cause 2
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS



Crysis 2
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



Majin The Fallen Realm
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS



Dead Rising 2
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ



MotoGP 09/10
GENRE: RACING
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ



Metal Gear Solid Rising
GENRE: ACTION
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS



Super Street Fighter IV
GENRE: FIGHTER
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ



L.A. Noire
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR



Resonance of Fate
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

MARCH 2010



Battlefield: Bad Company 2
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



Medal of Honor
GENRE: SHOOTER
DISTRIBUTOR: EA



Tony Hawk: Ride
GENRE: SPORT
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION



Resonance of Fate
GENRE: RPG
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

AUSTRALIAN CHARTS

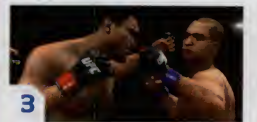
Source: GfK



1 Modern Warfare 2



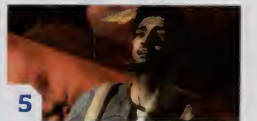
2 Assassin's Creed II



3 UFC 2009 Undisputed



4 FIFA 10



5 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves



6 Tekken 6



7 Avatar



8 Need for Speed SHIFT



9 DJ Hero



10 EyePet

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"I don't agree with people who say the board's not responsive... I think a lot of them came into it with an attitude that it's going to suck." **Pro-skater and videogame consultant Tony Hawk criticises US critics who blasted his latest game, Ride.**



"F--ked up. Talk about collateral damage." **The reaction from actress Michelle Rodriguez when she was told about the supposed requirement to kill civilians Modern Warfare 2's controversial 'No Russian' level.**



"This is scaremongering and typical religious hysteria. You cannot blame society's ills on videogames." **UK Capcom PR rep Leo Tan responds to comments from clergymen who say Resident Evil promotes the occult.**



"I know enough not to go offering outright condemnation of things about which I know comparatively little." **Bishop Bryant responds to Tan, saying his initial comments had been misrepresented. Friends, again?**



OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
ANDY ASTRUC

KILL A BABY, LEVEL UP

Yesterday I killed a man. Dozens, actually. I also ran over 35 innocent pedestrians in a golf cart, eviscerated a little girl, sacrificed my wife to ultimate evil for a cash reward, cut open the organs of a defenceless prisoner, committed genocide (twice), and punched a kitten. I also managed to save the universe from certain destruction and cure all forms of cancer.

Moral choice is a popular gimmick in gaming these days – it almost has its own place alongside punch-kick combos and pressing **X** to jump. Unfortunately, to call the attempts so far half-assed would be an insult to donkeys. Usually it boils down to good versus evil, whatever that means. Do nice, happy, rainbow-themed things and at the end of the game everyone will love you, you'll get the girl, and the world will be the Best Place Ever™. Commit horrible misdeeds, slit the throats of children and generally act like a big meanie and you'll probably be responsible for the apocalypse.

Video games handle morality with all the grace of an overweight pigeon. Every choice

is spelled out (often literally) in big flashing letters. Evil options will be so evil that only a monster would choose them in real life. Good acts will be things like giving hugs to old people and offering to donate your lungs to terminally ill pixies.

BioShock is a major offender. The very obvious decision you make in the game is 'Do I *kill children* to get *awesome stuff*?' If you gut the girlies you get a massive boost of power juice, if you save their lives you get a tiny sip. The game continues along a pre-set path regardless, before the conclusion shows that you either became Underwater Hitler, or everyone's favourite orphan-cuddling grandpa. That *BioShock* is a game filled with moral and ethical grey areas makes such a stupidly cartoonish choice even worse.

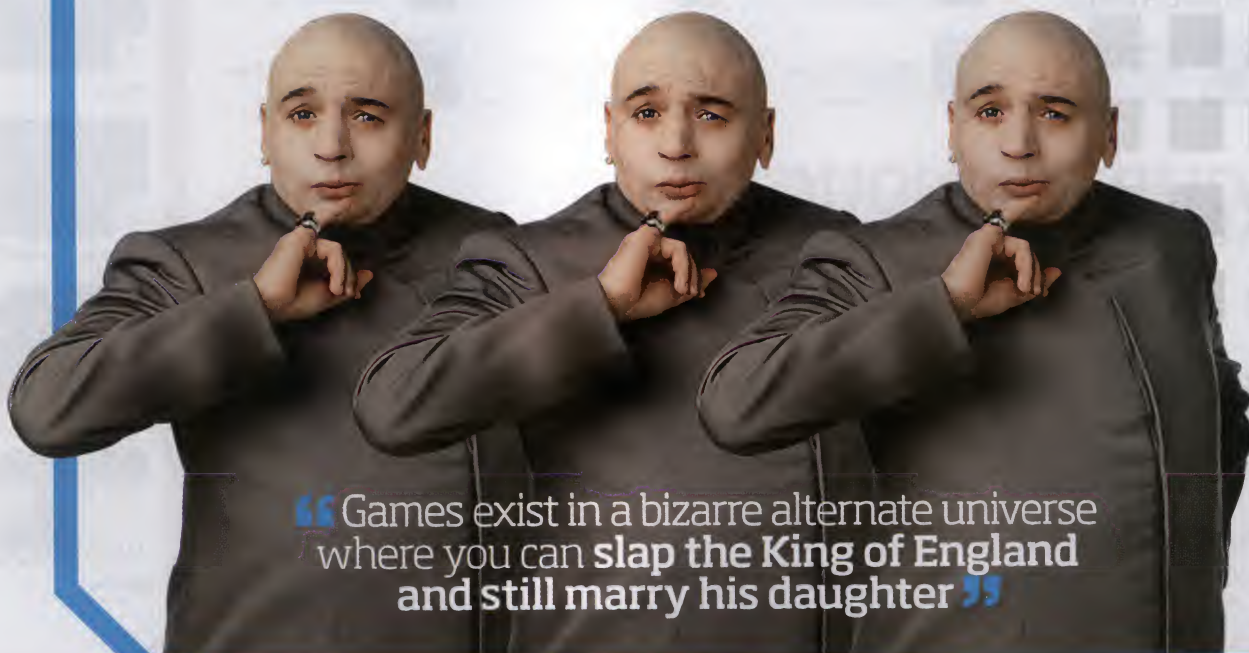
As well as all this moral coin-flipping, there's also the issue that nothing you do matters. Games exist in a bizarre alternate universe where you can slap the King of England in the face and still marry his daughter. The *Fable* games advertise moral

choices as their main selling point, yet whether you become a paragon of virtue, heroics and sexy hairstyles, or a fat, bigamist serial killer with devil horns, the main quest and the end result are basically identical.

The answer? Games shouldn't be about moral choices at all, they should be about results. If I cut off a man's legs for no reason, steal someone's wife, push people off a bridge, save a baby from a burning building, kick a chicken, donate a million dollars to charity, defeat an evil wizard or build a planet-cracking death ray, it should be the characters who judge me, not a bastard-calculator. If I choose to do something in a game, everything that happens next should follow from that choice.

If everything thing I do happens because of everything I do, I should be able to figure out how evil I am on my own.

Andy Astruc is a freelance journalist who is pre-owned, but still comes shrink-wrapped with his own instruction manual in five languages.



“Games exist in a bizarre alternate universe where you can slap the King of England and still marry his daughter”

DON'T TURN A NIGHT OUT

70 Australians under 25 will be hospitalised
due to alcohol-caused assault in an average week.

www.australia.gov.au/drinkingnightmare

INTO A NIGHTMARE

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
ANGRY SACKBOY

BEDTIME FOR DEMOCRACY

Angry Sackboy has provided quite a massive rant this month, and we couldn't bring ourselves to trim it down for his usual one page. We also couldn't bring ourselves to pay him for six pages when we only asked for one - but he didn't mind. Probably. He's never been *this* angry...

In an epic six-page letter to his most verbal critics, South Australian Attorney General Michael Atkinson has detailed why he remains opposed to bringing our classification system up to world standards. Atkinson, allow me to dismantle your thesis and illustrate to you how off the mark you truly are.

"What the present law does is keep the most extreme material off the shelves. It is true that this restricts adult liberty to a small degree, however, I am prepared to accept this infringement in the circumstances."

You are prepared to accept this infringement? How noble of you. "They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety." Benjamin Franklin said that. It's a slippery slope Atkinson. I don't require you to make my decisions. If I wanted your opinion I would've asked for it. You seem to forget Australia is a nation of 21,374,000 people. I reject your apparent belief that the 13,074 votes you received in the 2006 South Australian state election from your 16.9 square kilometre electorate gives you the mandate to choose what is fit for the whole nation.

New Zealand and the UK both have adult categories for videogames that are legally restricted. Your continued opposition means you believe we are not entitled to the same freedom of choice that New Zealand and UK residents have available to them. This is offensive.

What you've done here is admit that your staunch refusal to approve an update for our classification system is an infringement. Your words. In a legal context, an infringement refers to the violation of a law or a right. As freethinking individuals we have the right to choose, and it's that right you're breaching. Advising us on the level of appropriateness of content is one thing, preventing us from accessing content is another. That's not classification, that's censorship.

"It has been suggested that games that would otherwise be classified R18+ are instead slipping through as MA15+ and becoming accessible to children. This argument does not support an R18+ classification for games."

Yes, it does. You argue it doesn't and cite as evidence that the majority of gamers pay no attention to ratings and children are playing



MA15+ rated games already. Your argument is invalid – the majority of gamers are over 18 and thus ratings are mostly moot, and you have no evidence to suggest parents would be equally disinclined to allow children to play R18+ games as they are MA15+ games. Has that question even been asked? Research indicates most adults (nearly two-thirds) are not actually even aware that Australia lacks an R18+ classification for games.

You haven't done your research, Atkinson. The fact is the overwhelming majority of games rated suitable for 15-year-olds in Australia (and even younger if accompanied by a parent or adult guardian) are rated higher elsewhere in the world. Over 90% of games classified MA15+ between June and November 2009 were rated 17+ in the US. All but one was rated either 16+ or 18+ in Europe. What's the solution here? Ban them all? This is what you would want, but this is a selfish, emotional and irrational desire. *Modern Warfare 2*'s launch beat all previous first-and-five-day entertainment industry box office, book and video game sell-through records. All records. Ever. It's the fastest-grossing entertainment product in history. Are you really proposing we partially-cripple a \$2 billion

industry (in this country alone) by outlawing hugely popular products like *Modern Warfare 2*? How many steps away are we from banning everything else you personally dislike? *Harry Potter* books are banned in schools across the United Arab Emirates. Have you read those?

"It is up to parents and responsible adults to ensure a game is appropriate for a minor whatever age he or she is."

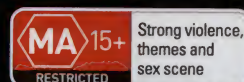
This is your argument? It sounds a lot like ours. I reject your assertion that you actually believe it is up to parents to ensure a game is appropriate for a minor. If you did believe this you wouldn't be interfering with the adoption of an adult category – a category (and rating symbol) that would make it very clear to any adult that this game is not intended for children under any circumstances, accompanied or otherwise. However, you also stated in a Radio National interview, "I have no trust in the Classification Board to apply the guidelines sincerely and correctly." You refuse to allow adults the ability to decide what they feel is appropriate for their own households on their own terms, and you have no trust in the Board. Therefore I instead propose that

○ HEAVY RAIN 25.02.10

⊙ DECEIVE

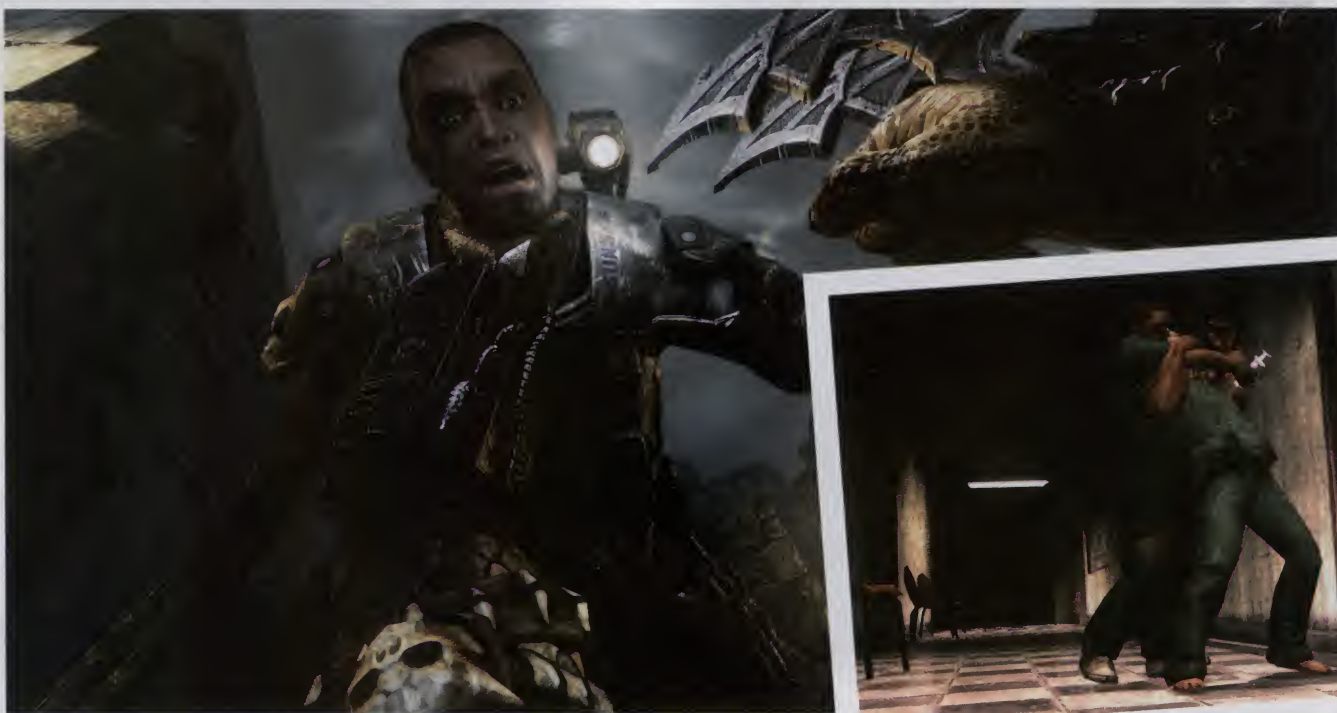
→ INVESTIGATE

⊗ EXECUTE





BEDTIME FOR
DEMOCRACY



“There are people who still believe Earth is flat...Believing something is true does not make it so. Sticking feathers in your arse does not make you a chicken”

you believe it is up to yourself to decide what is appropriate for everybody's children. If I wanted you raising my kids I'd send them to you on weekends.

"I believe the repeated act of killing a computer-generated person or creature desensitises them to violence."

I don't care what you believe; all I care about are facts. There are people who still believe Earth is flat. Real people, who presumably went to school. Earth, as I imagine you know, is not flat. Believing something is true does not make it so. Sticking feathers in your arse does not make you a chicken.

Several major studies by groups including The Harvard Medical School Center for Mental Health, *The Journal of Adolescent Health* and *The British Medical Journal* have shown no conclusive link between video game

usage and violent activity. Many studies have reached the conclusion that violence in video games is not causally linked with aggressive tendencies. A meta-analysis by psychologist Jonathan Freedman, who reviewed over 200 published studies and found that the "vast and overwhelming majority" did not find a causal link, also reached this conclusion. Despite the mainstream media's best efforts, simply associating the fact that violent sociopaths may have played a violent videogame is meaningless. The hardest thing for people like to accept is that videogames have not been proven to be anymore responsible for criminal behaviour than heavy metal. A US Secret Service study found that only 12 per cent

of those involved in school shootings were attracted to violent video games, while 24 per cent read violent books and 27 per cent were attracted to violent films. This only illustrates violent people are attracted to violent media. It does not indicate that violent media causes violent people. An Australian study found that only children already predisposed to violence were affected by violent games.

Furthermore, many studies regarding the impact of violent video games draw comparisons to non-violent games, not to other media. A study may demonstrate that after playing a violent video game a person may act more aggressively than someone who played a non-violent video game, but these are only short-term results. However, similar results can be replicated by having someone play a frustrating and/or difficult version of a non-violent game.

You can believe in one hand and shit in the other, and see which one gets filled first. The simple fact is we have a system in place that allows minors to play adult games. In this



age of digital piracy and international online shopping, banning games will have little effect on the presence of said games in this country. The real answer is a system that advertises mature games as suitable only for persons aged over 18. Simple.

"In cinemas, the age of movie-goers can be regulated."

What about DVDs? Are video store clerks different to game store clerks? The fine is the same. Just because a child will have difficulty getting into a cinema showing an R18+ film does not mean that they cannot access the film in a few months time when it is available on DVD. You must call for the outlawing of all age-restricted content or none of it, lest you become a hypocrite. Currently you are a hypocrite. The classification system either works for films, books and games equally or it doesn't at all. You don't get to have it both ways.

"I think you will find this issue has little traction with my constituents who are more concerned with real life issues than home entertainment in imaginary worlds."

Great. A few thousand South Australians who feel classification is a non-issue sounds like the perfect group to dictate classification issues for the whole country.

Don't piss down my back and tell me it's raining Atkinson. If you feel your voters are so unconcerned with home entertainment in imaginary worlds why did you find it necessary to declare you'll be appealing the classification for *Modern Warfare 2*? If your constituency doesn't care, why do you? You can't have your cake and eat it too. Yes, it's imaginary entertainment and it's not concerning anyone. Your words. You're probably right too. Your 2007/2008 report on the activities of the South Australian Classification Council indicates you had ONE "query about classification of films/video/DVD", ONE "query about classification guidelines" and SIX "complaints about merchandise". That's from a population of over 1.5 million over 12 months. I'll remind you *Grand Theft Auto IV* was released during this period, classified MA15+ (which includes the ability to beat up prostitutes – an act you rarely fail to bring up when arguing *against* an R18+ rating). Didn't exactly stir up much controversy, did it? So, whom are you representing here? Just you, I presume. Your office isn't a means

to further your own personal agendas.

A newer version of the Bond University study quoted by you in your letter states that over 91% of gamers and non-gamers were in favour of an R18+ classification for games. Continuing to ignore this statistic is anything but representative. Do you need a democracy refresher Atkinson?

"...without depraved sex, gore and cruelty."

Did you *really* need that adjective Atkinson? I missed the memo when sex became evil again. I guess that's why the sexually explicit film *9 Songs* is only banned in your state, not mine. Sex goes in the same sentence as gore and cruelty? Really? Please explain why you feel physical intimacy is so awful. Don't you have four kids? Immaculate conception? Come on.

Change the record Atkinson. Your go-to list of dangerous games is misleading and hopelessly irrelevant. You constantly reference an obscure Japanese PC game *RapeLay* released in Japan four years ago. If you truly believe this game would suddenly be released in Australia immediately following the introduction of an R18+ rating you're more ill-informed than I ever could have guessed. You've been told this bizarre game was never intended for release in any country outside of Japan, yet to continue to reference it. You're a fear-monger.

"In the long run of history, the censor and inquisitor have always lost." That was the former Yale University president, A. Whitney Griswold, in 1952. You're just stalling the inevitable. Besides, the world is too small of a place for any of your posturing to make a lick of difference.

It's abundantly clear you have no idea what you're talking about when it comes to *Modern Warfare 2*. You claim you play as a terrorist and get points for massacring civilians. This is patently false. You play as an undercover CIA agent who is present during a massacre. You do not score points for shooting civilians. You are not encouraged to shoot civilians. If you had researched this you'd know this, but you haven't. Speed-reading a few sensationalist news articles is not adequate, Atkinson. You've waded into this debate with the wrong information and you've been left with egg on your face. This level is shocking, no doubt, but that is *entirely the point*.

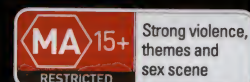
"Why is it that we are not allowed to be shocked and offended? Where is it written?

○ HEAVY RAIN 25.02.10

○ MURDER

○ CONFESS

⊗ PROTECT





BEDTIME FOR DEMOCRACY



It's good to be shocked and offended... If we have nothing that makes us feel shocked, how do we know what our value system is?" That was Janet Strickland (ex-Chief Censor, 1979-1986) as quoted in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 July 1996.

The airport level you speak of, with absolutely no credibility whatsoever I'm afraid, is a narrative device. *Modern Warfare 2* is a simple tale. Good guys versus bad guys. The bad guys, in this case, are defined by their appalling actions in this controversial level. If depictions of terrorism warrant refusal of classification I would request you also ask the board to reconsider the classification for the films *The Kingdom*, *The Siege*, *Invasion USA* and any other film that utilises a scene involving terrorists claiming lives in order to provide the crucial narrative necessary to define the onscreen persons as antagonists.

This is the very definition of shutting

the gate after the horse has bolted. You'd like nothing more than to keep this game out of Australian homes. It's too late. It's in thousands of them already. Still, I hope your appeal to ban *Modern Warfare 2* succeeds and the many, many thousands of consumers yet to purchase the biggest entertainment product of all time are forced to use online retailers and send Australian dollars overseas. How will the local industry respond to having the fastest-grossing entertainment product ever yanked from their shelves and banned? How will the regular, law-abiding adults of Western Australia feel? Unlike the other states and territories, it's illegal to own refused classification videogames in WA. If *Modern Warfare 2* is reclassified how many average citizens will you turn

into criminals in one fell swoop? I can't say I'd appreciate the Gestapo banging down my door with a \$10,000 infringement notice after pulling my details from the local EB Games, especially when my crime was simply owning a videogame that the SA Attorney General just didn't like. Hardly seems fair, does it?

In a letter to the *Adelaide Advertiser* in March last year you referred to proponents of an R18+ category as "R18+ nerds". You consistently maintain you have far more

“That so many of us live so comfortably the state of our **out-dated and unsafe** classification guidelines ranks high on our personal agendas is a blessing”



“Your assertion an R18+ rating will see the arrival of videogames based on suicide bombers and rape is **deceptive and patently absurd**”

important problems to deal with. It's true there are a great many issues that need immediate action, and a change in our classification guidelines is small fish compared to more pressing matters of health and education. Referring to people who'd like to see adult content categorised accordingly as nerds, however, only embarrasses you. It's hardly a mature response from a man in your position. To be honest, we all should be happy we live in such a stable, peaceful country that the R18+ discussion is something we can afford to even entertain in the first place. That so many of us live so comfortably the state of our out-dated and unsafe classification guidelines ranks high on our personal agendas is a blessing, not something to be derided.

It's irresponsible for a man in your position to rely on false information to frighten the public into being concerned for no reason. Your explanation of the offending content in *Modern Warfare 2* is false. Your assertion an R18+ rating will see the arrival

of videogames based on suicide bombers and rape is deceptive and patently absurd. It's irresponsible for a man in your position to abandon objective reality and empirical evidence in favour of passionate 'belief' and general fabrication.

When the Liberal Party and the minor parties combined to vote against your Legislative Council reforms in October 2009 you said, "Those who voted against this Bill thought about their own necks well ahead of the public interest." How about you practise what you preach Atkinson? The public are calling for classification reform. The discussion paper is out, and the arguments are being heard. Whose neck are you thinking about?

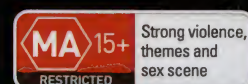
Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogames journalist who chooses not to tolerate deeply conservative crackpots and no longer obeys word counts when he's extra cross. He's never been to South Australia, and isn't planning to address that in the immediate future.



○ HEAVY RAIN 25.02.10

Ⓜ MURDER

ⓧ PROTECT



COMPETITIONS

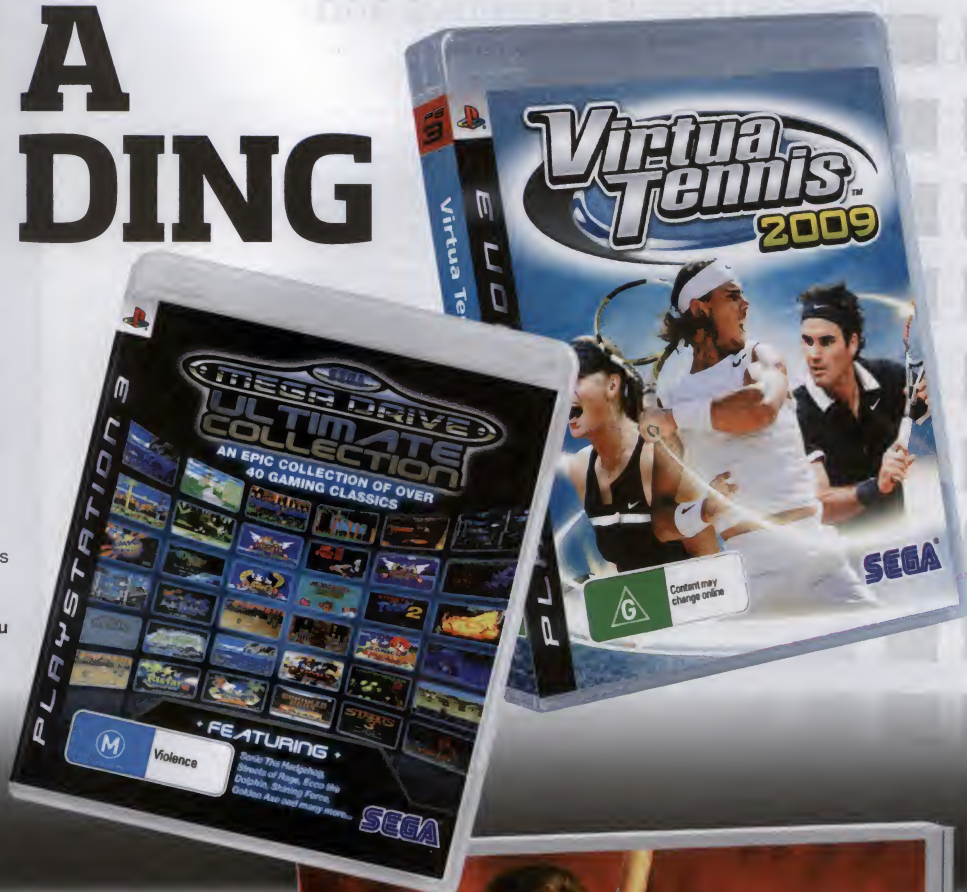
WIN! WIN! WIN!

RING A DING DING

Thanks to our good friends at Boost and Sega we've got five copies of the best tennis game available on PS3, *Virtua Tennis 2009*, to give away, as well as five copies of the fine retro compilation, *Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection*, which has a stack of 16-bit *Sonic*, *Streets of Rage* and *Phantasy Star Online* titles amongst its 40-plus games!

For a chance to win a copy of either of these (titles will be drawn at random), answer the question below and follow the entry instructions on page 29.

Question: In 25 words or less, what have you got in your collection (real or made up), and what makes it so ultimate?

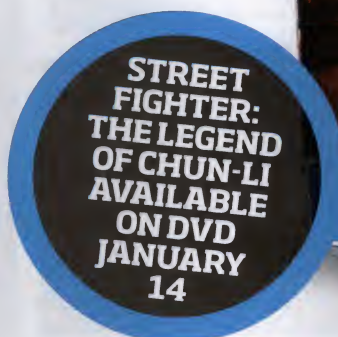


A CHUN OF FUN

Thanks to Roadshow Entertainment, we have 10 copies of *Street Fighter: The Legend Of Chun-Li* to give away. Based on the legendary videogame, this live action feature follows Chunnors, played by Kristin Kreuk, as she grows up from being a piano hero to a butt-kicking super minx.

For a chance to win a copy, answer the question below and follow the entry instructions on page 29.

Question: In 25 words or less, what's the most bad-arse instrument to learn as a kid before you grew up to become a street fighter?



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GO DJ!

Thanks to Activision, we have five copies of the award-winning (see p57) turntable spectacular, *DJ Hero* on PS3, to give away. The package includes a copy of the game as well as a wireless turntable.

For a chance to win a copy, answer the question below and follow the entry instructions at the bottom of this page.

Question: In 25 words or less, what's your DJ name and what is your signature mix?



HOW TO ENTER

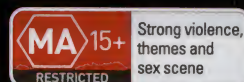
To enter **Official PlayStation Magazine** competitions email your entries to ops@themediainfactory.com.au with the name of the competition **ONLY** in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted!). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to **OPS** competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 24/03/2010. Winners will be notified by mail.

○ HEAVY RAIN 25.02.10

Ⓢ DIE

Ⓢ RUN

Ⓢ ATTACK



Speak to us!

LETTER OF THE MONTH!



STATION VACATION

Firstly, LOVE the magazine, VALUE the reviews. I have come to rely on the extremely insightful opinions of the games reviews each month and have to stop myself going out and buying these legendary games.

The main reason for my email is to let the readers know just how grateful I am to be a PS3 owner. Not only do I have access to the games that continue to blow my mind, but the increasing use of the PS3 as my media hub continues to amaze me as well.

I recently spent a week up on the Sunshine Coast with my family. Before I left, I quickly converted a few digital copies of some family favourite movies on to the hard drive, ensured that we had some great music to listen to and of course brought along a few games for my five year old son (LEGO Batman and LEGO Star Wars, The Simpsons and Spider-Man: Web of Shadows) just in case we got bored.

Imagine my distress upon arrival when I noticed that the TV (if it can be called that) was 26-inches and not even flat and without a high def input. I

am so used to my extravagant 42-inch flat LCD at home.

The impressiveness of the PS3 shone through.

A quick trip to a mates place saw the fabulous PS3 converted backwards and we were able to watch, listen and play.

The machine is brilliant. I can not wait to see what the future brings us in the way of gaming and entertainment.

Thanks for reading this.
Neil Pynenburg, via email

It was our pleasure to read your email, Neil. We're giving you Letter of the Month not just because you are an avid fan of the mag who obviously loves his PlayStation 3, but because you are... a pioneer.

We're giving you our highest letter accolade for actually taking your PS3 on holiday with you, for living to tell the tale, and for becoming a font of inspiration for the rest of us under the lash.

It sounds like you

concocted the perfect cover story (readers, take notes as this will now be a textbook example of how to assault this problem): the games were for your 'son', the music and movies were for 'everyone'. Finally, you capped the ruse off with the phrase 'just in case'. Simply magnificent.

Even as gaming journos we sometimes get the cold shoulder from our significant others when we "have to" include a console into our going-away luggage. So it's great to hear that there are other people out there who also have the cojones to run the same (potentially relationship destroying) gauntlet.

As if we couldn't respect your dedication enough, you then made a special trip out to acquire some old school cables to play the PS3 on an eyeball-insulting 26-inch TV. So full of win.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS...

THE SABOTEUR

The letter of the month this issue will receive a copy of *The Saboteur* for their troubles - enjoy!

ON THE MIC ABOUT MIKE

I know this has all been said before, but with Michael Atkinson's recent decision to try and have MW2 pulled from shelves and his attack on the Classification Board, I thought it worth bringing up again.

As a parent I do agree with Mr. Atkinson in part; certain material shouldn't be available to young children, but I fail to see how not having an R18+ rating for video games will make this any easier to achieve. If anything, one would argue that it would make it easier for parents, especially the non-gaming parents, to make an informed decision on what games are suitable for their children. With a large majority of the voting public in favour of an R18+ rating, you have to wonder if Mr. Atkinson is expressing the opinion of the people he is supposed to represent, or pushing his own agenda.

As for his two new targets (MW2 and the Classification Board), I think he has been misinformed on the now infamous Airport level. He has claimed that the player receives bonus in-game scores for killing the civilians, which we all know is not true. There is no score system in the game and you can play through that section of the level without firing a shot or even skip the level altogether with no penalty at all. Now if there was a trophy for killing X amount of unarmed civilians I could understand.

Anyway he has missed the boat on banning MW2, it's probably already in more Australian homes than not by now.

I am sure he has not won any friends over at the Classification Board either, with his comments that they are not doing their jobs by letting games with questionable content 'fly under the radar' and hit the shelves. While the decisions of the Classification Board are not going to suit everybody, they can only make their decisions based on the current antiquated system. Maybe they could do a better job if the rating system was updated, Mr. Atkinson?

It is a sad reflection of our political system when one man can dictate to the rest of us what we 'need' when the majority of public, and government, opinion is clearly in favour of change.

Adin Shepherd, via email

The dissent over the R18+ situation has really heated up lately. Honestly, we're just stoked that everybody is getting vocal, and that most people are getting onboard with the cause. We may be repeating ourselves here, but you should all get a hold of the discussion paper online and submit your responses (maturely, and after a spell check). Organise, people!

UTTERLY SOULLESS

I recently read the reviews of *Demon's Souls* online and decided to drop by the nearest JB Hi Fi to get the game and then my arse handed back to me numerous times. However, the dude told me that it is only an American and Japan release. So I tried to purchase it online but its being sold twice or triple its

original price on eBay. And then I read in the newest issue of *OPS* that it ranked fourth in the USA. So I'm even more desperate to get my hands on it (especially the Deluxe Edition). Any idea when it will be out in Australia or a way to get the Deluxe Edition at a cheaper price?

Shanidus Tan, via email

We have called out our unholy minions to put the squeeze on all the industry informants we know of - there's absolutely nothing on an Aussie (or even a European) release date. Yet.

If you're so desperate you just can't wait we suggest seeing what you can spot online.

THE OPS FACEBOOK PAGE NEEDS YOU!

If you're on Facebook and you read the mag (which you're doing right now), join our fan page for exclusive competitions, breaking news and intelligent banter with other gamers, fans and the guys who make this award winning publication.

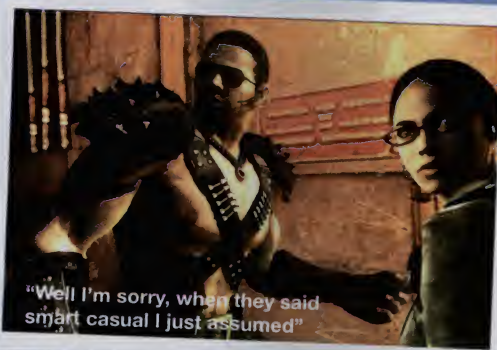
Search for Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia, or go to tinyurl.com/OPSAus, and get involved!



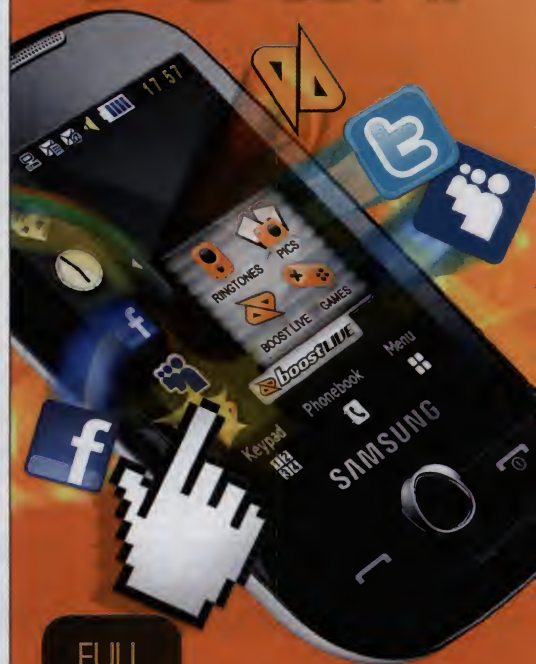
Facebook fans were buzzing when the news came through that the appeal from Sega for *Aliens Vs. Predator* that actually (amazingly) got through, as well as the public consultation for an R18+ rating on videogames. It would be almost impossible for Michael Atkinson not to get a mention considering the subject. Check page 10 and Angry Sackboy on p22 for our take on this pivotal turn of events.

CAPTION THIS!

There were a few good ones this month, but the winner with a line that left an awkward, hanging pause in the air is Mathew Falzon. It's like an itch we just can't scratch. Well done Mathew.



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CUTTINGS AIN'T GOT TIME TO BLEED

SABOTAGED

I shed a tear for Pandemic when they got closed before releasing *The Saboteur*.

Ralph, Wollongong

We got a little emotional too, Ralph. The difference is we didn't talk about it. No, wait. We just did. Damn it!

SQUARE EYES

I have got to say that Play TV (minus the dollar tag) is the absolute shizangle. I can't believe how many episodes of *Fraiser* and *Seinfeld* I have been missing because I was playing PS3 games and didn't have a TV guide handy.

Tyler James, NSW

We hear that, dude. How sweet it is to multi-task by playing a game while recording classic sit-coms. Life doesn't get much better.

Hey guys, I have been a long time reader since your old PS2 mag days but this is the first time that I've written in about something. *Aliens vs. Predator* that was due for release for 2010 was recently denied access into Australian game stores and reignites the age-old debate about having an R18+ classification. In this first-person sci-fi shooter, the player can choose to undertake campaigns as a Colonial Marine, Alien or Predator following the awakening of the 'face-huggers' by an archaeological digging team.

The game was refused classification because (and I quote from the report) for "close-up depictions of human characters being subjected to various types of violence, including explicit decapitation and dismemberment as well as locational damage such as stabbing through the chest, mouth, throat, or eyes." The report later continues to state, "The violence in the game causes a high playing impact due to its first-person,

close up perspective, conceptual nature and the level of explicit detail involved in the depictions. The game is therefore unsuitable for minors to see and play and should be refused classification." The key word in that phrase is 'minors'; Australian gamers are not 'minors' the average age for a gamer is 30. So overall I think it's time that games are able to received the 'feared' 'R' classification for games. Thanks guys, love the mag keep it up!
Liam Hardy, via email

As of writing, *Aliens vs Predator* has passed re-submission and

will be released uncut. Sega Australia tell us: "The team at Rebellion have been true to the *Aliens* and *Predator* universes and created a title that allows gamers to experience first-hand all the thrill, tension and excitement of the *Aliens* and *Predator* movies." Sweet!



THE PlayStation CROSSWORD!

TEST YOUR BRAIN TO WIN A GAME! How to enter: Use the letters from the coloured squares and re-arrange them to form the name of a videogame character. Send your answers to OPS@derwentward.com.au with OPS Crossword as the subject. Entries close March 24.

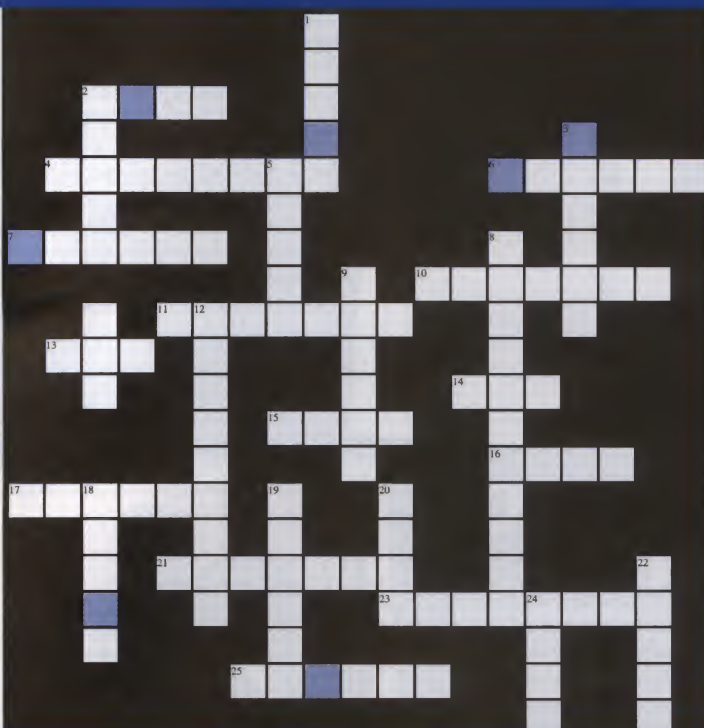
Across

2. One of Dick Marcinko's nicknames, The ____ (4)
4. The real star of *Collin McRae DiRT 2* (3,5)
6. Eddie Riggs is a ____ (6)
7. *Uncharted 2* non-English speaker (6)
10. Home of the Nurburgring Nordscheife (7)
11. You can't say this in *Band Hero* ____ (7)
13. Location of *Max Payne 3*, ____ Paulo (3)
14. Germany's *Pro Race Driver* ____ (3)
15. Returning for *Super Street Fighter IV* (4)
16. She's all WET (4)
17. The Saboteur in *The Saboteur*, Sean ____ (6)
21. What drink company advertised in *Wipeout 2097?* (3,4)
23. NOT making the next *True Crime* (8)
25. Ex-KGB bitch in

Syphon Filter, Mara ____ (6)

Down

1. A dark shooter (5)
2. Getting its own *Rock Band* game (5,3)
3. Not returning for *Super Street Fighter IV* (6)
5. Before *Arkham Asylum* there was *Urban* ____ (5)
8. This racing game is MORTARING US (4,7)
9. Tier 1 Operators can grow these (6)
12. The virus in *Syndicate Wars* (9)
18. Killzone planet (5)
19. The Beatles album released on PSN, ____ *Soul* (6)
20. Upcoming '60s bikie game, *Ride to* ____ (4)
22. The evil alien in *Crash Team Racing*, Nitros ____ (5)
24. Harder than a hippy jump (4)



Last month's answers Across 1. BOOMSTICK 4. BEATDOWN 6. GIANTENEMYCRAB 8. MODERNWARFARE 9. COOLBOARDS 11. PACIFICRIFT 16. VALKYRIA 17. MORDYKOOT 18. HEATSEEKER 19. ATKINSON Down 2. KANGAROO 3. BLOODCURSE 5. SAKIMOTO 7. CODEMASTERS 10. MADUREIRA 12. JOHNNOW 13. ANGELS 14. REVENGE 15. PANDORA

THE OPS QUIZ THING

Our imaginatively titled quiz will sort out the wheat from the chaff. Prove your worth with these brainbusters!

THE OPS MEGA QUIZ

A. In *Where To Now*, we take the games and reinvent them to explore a brand new direction. See if you can guess which games we remixed below:



1. A side-scrolling adventure full of awesome locations, such as the Centrelink waiting room and the back alley of the local pub.

2. Magic is a complete load of guff so our young adventurer will have to trade in his mysterious acrobatic skills for something entirely tenable, like robot appendages and anti-gravitational boots.

3. Press the button to smile, and the to wave politely. raises a white flag, while throws a kitten. Use and to toggle kittens.

4. Um, *Bullitt*. Is that enough?

5. To help in choosing which industries to spare and which to raze, you'll receive helpful advice over the codec from Al Gore, inventor of the internet.

6. A 2D music rhythm game that delves into the technical anapestic tetrameter and amphibrachic tetrameter is a tad niche. And painful to get right.

7. Three words. Communist Nazi terrorists.

8. Imagine a cosmic nexus linking every dunny in all of time and space.

C. Some games are the cream of the crop and some are the bottom of the barrel. Match our critique to the right title.

1. The reactions of the enemy, both visually and aurally, are so spot on you almost feel bad for shooting them. Almost.

2. Players can get tricky in a nasty "I just fooled you into selling me your baby" kind of way.

3. Players... must pummel their way to victory by hammering the attack buttons like a horny chimpanzee pepped up on a sweaty dance-party drug.

4. His wide, wavering eyes add to the impression that he's a showroom dummy that's just come to life, and unsure what to do with his new existence.

5. He's also a little schizophrenic, at times seeming to move in a sort of slow motion and others pirouetting on the spot with alarming quickness.

6. It's epic nerd boner material.

7. It's the kind of game that's extraordinarily difficult to stop playing, because it gives and gives.

8. The cacophony of yowling gearbox combined with screeching tires and whining brakes means you'll come away exhausted.

9. He again proves the power of imagination and the value of sheer class: this game rocks, and rocks hard.

10. Every benchmark of excellence has been missed.

11. It begs the question: what are the developers doing all day?

12. Cue up 'Eye of the Tiger', grab a side of beef and get tenderising.

13. The deeper you go down the rabbit hole, the more rewarding the experience becomes.

14. The game handles like a ferret

trying to bite you on the ballbag: you're always, desperately, trying to make it go the way it's almost obstinately not.

15. It's bewilderingly inconsistent. In fact, it's consistently inconsistent.

16. Everything from the animation, character detail and slick framerate to clang of metal on metal... all contribute to making this a perfect pocket fighter.

17. This is going to be a volley of football mania worth scoring

18. It's the kind of game where you pause, hoot like loons, fist bump one another and blabber about what just happened until the next cool moment.

19. It... somehow manages to make what was already seamless an even more satisfying, perfectly balanced experience.

20. If this game doesn't warm the cockles of your heart, then you simply don't have one

21. It brings more of what we love about the series: weird, scary monsters... massive boss fights, a convoluted plot... and really, truly beautiful graphics

22. It... becomes clear that this is a game for adults masquerading as kiddie fare.

23. This game is uniquely bad

24. You need this game like you need oxygen.

25. You pull off insane, crazy moves that feel arsey but realistic within the surprisingly deep sci-fi background of the game.

26. The game mechanics, the story, presentation, music and interface all conspire to play silly buggers with your perceptions of what video gaming is all about.

27: The top-notch voice acting and dialogue serve to sculpt characters you actually care about.

B. We've interviewed a lot of talented people over the year. What games are these people talking about?

1. "It was more a case of let's be awesome"

2. "Circles, spheres, ellipses, toruses, parallel lines and so on"

3. "Why would we want to make a 'bog standard action title'?"

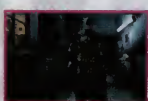
4. "I've always loved the downhill jam level, to this day. That was 2, right?"

5. "I think I've been dreaming about it since I was 14 years old."

6. "As soon as someone famous has a haircut - we have to go back"

7. "There's just something RAW about, like, okay 'I'm gonna dodge,' and go 'aaaghh, cool,' and I blew the guy up."

8. "More is better"



Ian Ball



Randy Pitchford



Tim Schafer



David Rutter



Kazunori Yamauchi



Ben Mattes



Charles Morrow



Tony Hawk

ANSWERS A: 1: LittleBigPlanet, 2: Prince of Persia, 3: Call of Duty 4: Driver 5: Duke Nukem 6: The Chronicles of Riddick 7: Wolfenstein, 8: TimeSplitters B: 1: Ben Mattes, Prince of Persia 2: Charles Morrow, Singularity 3: Ian Ball, Batman: Arkham Asylum 4: Tony Hawk, Tony Hawk 5: Kazunori Yamauchi, Gran Turismo 5 C: 1: Killzone 2, 2: Street Fighter IV, 3: The Lord of the Rings: Conquest, 4: Wanted: Weapons of Fate, 5: Demonfall, 6: Ghostbusters, 7: Uncharted 2: Among Thieves, 8: Need For Speed Shift, 9: Brutal Legend, 10: Cross Edge, 11: King of Fighters XII, 12: Fight Night Round 4, 13: Monster Hunter Freedom Unite, 14: Stompin', 15: Terminator Salvation, 16: Soulcalibur: Broken Destiny, 17: FIFA 10, 18: Borderlands, 19: Skate 2, 20: LocoRoco 2, 21: Resident Evil 5, 22: Patapon 2, 23: Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust, 24: Modern Warfare 2, 25: Red Faction: Guerrilla, 26: Infamous, 27: Patchet & Cland: A Crack in Time

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INCOMING



38 BIOSHOCK 2
Hands on
report with the
sequel and some
hints to give info

Exclusive looks at the very best

“Missing a whole platoon of hotheads, the enemy lose their foothold”

PS3 GENRE: SHOOTER | RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY | DEVELOPER: ZIPPER INTERACTIVE

MAG

“I don’t know but I’ve been told... shootin’ noobs is fricken’ gold”

Pictured: guy crouching. Not pictured: the teabag



IT'S LIKE...



Modern Warfare 2



Excessive Backup



It's a shooting gallery down there. Perched on the grassy knoll with our sniper rifle, we overlook a satellite installation (hereafter referred to as 'the barrel') as 40 enemy players ('the fish', if you will) flop about in open view. They think they're taking cover from our mates on the opposite flank, and our own commander thinks we've gone A.W.O.L. Both parties couldn't be more incorrect – we've just executed a pincer movement so spectacular, it'd make a giant enemy crab want to hang up his shell in shame.

Thanks to the lack of a death-cam, we flat out obliterate – not 'pick off', not 'suppress', obliterate – three quarters of the defenders. Respawnin' angry, an enemy platoon bands together and abandons their objective in an effort to neutralise the player they've now dubbed 'Lee Harvey Oswald'. We use our Desert Eagle to hand out three new haircuts before they mow us down in a blaze of glory.

However, it's a case of battle lost, war won. Missing a whole platoon of hotheads, the enemy lose their foothold and our comrades capture the satellite dish. The massive XP boost then earns us a rifle scope so accurate it would let us do refractive eye surgery from a helicopter (sharpshooters get more than normal XP for killing people in designated areas of importance, you see). Proudly equipping it for all to see, our 13-year-old platoon Sergeant tells us, "Snipers are lame" and reprimands us for not joining

the frontline. We line up a no-scope shot and discharge the Sarge.

Welcome to MAG! A glorious, exclusive MMO shooter that blow your mind with how many players are running about, just begging to be perforated. We recently had an opportunity to experience a private beta that supported a ludicrous 256 players trying to take a Satellite installation. MAG divides players into eight-player squads, with four squads forming a platoon, and four platoons forming a company. Of course, if one player wants to pick up a Barrett and go on a Vassili Zaitsev, lone wolf killing spree, the game supports that too.

During our brief soiree we had a chance to see the XP perks for all the various factions in MAG, and while they may not be quite as flashy as *Modern Warfare 2*, we were pretty happy with what we saw. There's no specific soldier class system, in its place is a free-form kit creator where you can save three different load-outs. The general idea being, you can quickly switch your load-out during respawn to match how the battle is going.

We can also tell you that there are four confirmed game types in MAG. 'Domination' is the main, 256-player mode. The attacking team will have its squads start scattered around the map's perimeter to the North, South, East, and West. Each squad has specific objectives to complete that ultimately add up to victory – the defending team must hold out. 'Acquisition' is



40 HEAVY RAIN
Our full featured report on the game's first play hours



42 KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS
Make way for the bad guys' sequel



Friends who slay together, stay together. 






a 128-player capture the flag mode with the attacking team stealing two 'prototype armoured transports' and taking them to extraction points. 'Sabotage' is a 64-player mode where attackers infiltrate enemy facilities and hold two control points simultaneously, then destroy a demolition objective. 'Suppression' is a 64-player team deathmatch mode of pure infantry battle. In short, MAG has just about every single flavour of killin' we know

and like, except for vanilla.

Though we didn't get to see all of MAG's tricks in the Beta (namely vehicles, parachuting, and what it was like to earn a leadership position and then send gullible idiots to die on some Godforsaken rock) we're already stoked with where this game is at. Paint this on your radar with an indelible marker, it's going to be a... well, massive... multiplayer online experience – in every sense of the word.  **Adam Mathew**

WE SAY

-  Feels tactical rather than chaotic
-  Massive environments
-  Looks lag free, so far

OPS IS...
covering our Privates



From Academy Award®-Winning Director
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INCOMING

BioShock 2

PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K GAMES | DEVELOPER: 2K MARIN

BIOSHOCK 2

Read this text, would you kindly...

IT'S LIKE...

The Little Mermaid



The Hills Have Eyes

Ah yes, under the sea. It's a place with no accusations, just friendly crustaceans – allegedly. Well, you know what? After getting reacquainted with Rapture, we think that statement couldn't be further from the truth. Whoever it was that told you life is much better down where it's wetter was either out of their gourd, or a pervert with a masterful control of rhyming metaphors. Under the sea is 'lick-your-own-elbow' madness (try that now, we'll wait) and it comes complete with warring corporations, monstrous enforcers, and certifiable freaks who'll kill you just as soon as collect your foreskin for a patchwork quilt. The city of Rapture is a sunken treasure chest teeming with crazy, and after only one minute of play in *BioShock 2*, we were happily ensnared in its rip and sucked down into the abyss all over again.

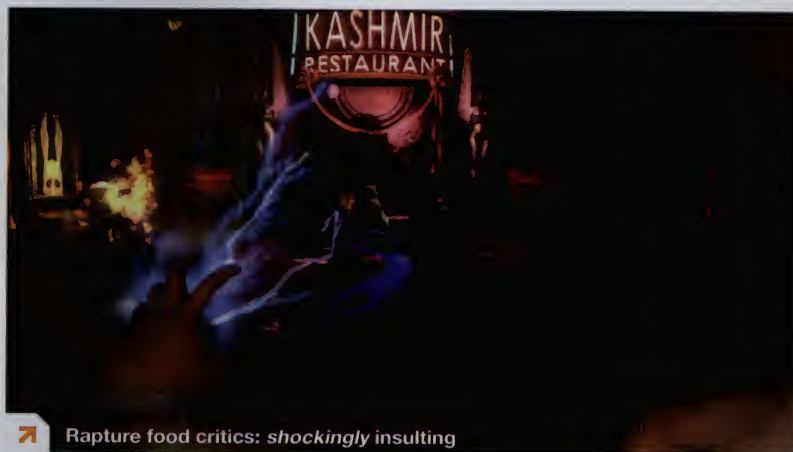
Our demo opens in tandem with the eyelids our protagonist. We've just awoken from a Vita-chamber and, thanks to a reflective

puddle of water beneath us, we realise that we're rocking a Big Daddy suit. The big-arsed drill welded on our right hand was a minor clue too. Along with the fashion change, we're in a previously unexplored section of the underwater city; Adonis Luxury Resort – Rapture's finest spa and getaway, if you believe the signage. If you're happier using your own eyeballs to assess the place you'll see that it is an area pocked with small arms fire, bristling with flickering neon lights and iridescent coral that is slowly reclaiming the tunnels. A voice – possibly Tenenbaum – tries to reach us via a comm link but it dies with a squelch. Intriguing. Very intriguing.

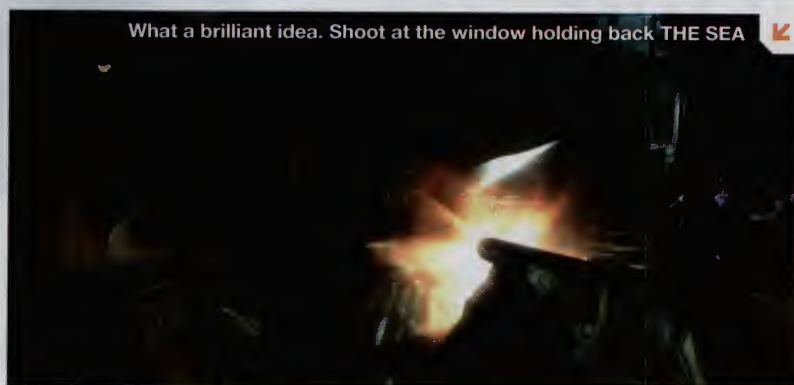
Moving deeper into the complex we're immediately surprised to find that our preconceptions of what a Big Daddy should feel like are largely incorrect. Movement is quite comparable to Jack from the original (minus the dull thud when you land a jump and the foghorn moans when you're shot). After a bit of

Disturbing point of entry there...

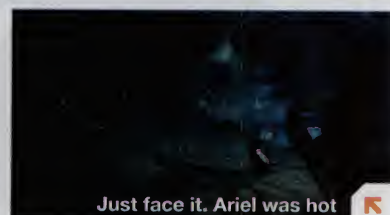




➤ Rapture food critics: *shockingly* insulting



➤ You're not our father...



Just face it. Ariel was hot



So. Are you a ladies man, Bob?

“A voice – possibly Tenenbaum – tries to reach us via a comm link, but it dies with a squelch. Intriguing”

exposition we soon discover that we were once one of the first Big Daddies, but we're also the first of a redesigned group (known as a Delta). This upgrade offers us more speed, free will, and came about to better facilitate a special bond to a single little sister, Eleanor Lamb. This diminutive charge is missing however and is soon identified as the 'daughter' of Sofia Lamb, prime antagonist of *BioShock 2*.

From what we could piece together from the superbly acted voice recordings; it's 10 years after the events of the original *BioShock* and Sofia Lamb has filled Fontaine/Ryan power vacuum. She is a professor in social psychiatry and was originally recruited by Ryan to help treat Rapture citizens suffering from a range of mental problems caused by... well, living at the bottom of the fricken ocean. Thanks to some psychobabble, Lamb has her own cult setup and if Ryan and Fontaine were masters of warping people's bodies, she is most certainly the queen of warping what remains of their

minds. Along with her hordes of splicers and the enigmatic Big Sister enforcers, she should prove to be quite a wily nemesis.

To take the fight directly to this subversive, submersive shrink, your creators have imbued you with the ability to dual-wield a firearm and a plasmid at the same time, along with the usual assortment of passive power tonics. Beyond this 'shocking' bio augmentation we discovered a plethora of cool new guns and gadgets too. You'll always be equipped with a drill whose benefits include epic melee attacks and the ability to chew through coral. The down side is you must constantly fill 'er up with fuel to get the most use out of it. Other weapons include a .50 cal minigun, and the rivet gun which can pelt out metal death, or fire special proximity rivets that act very similarly to the electro-trap bolts of *BioShock*.

Last, but not least, hacking as been completely overhauled with a new Hack Gun. You can now mess with electronics from afar

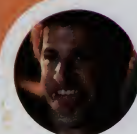
with a short timing minigame that occurs in real-time, rather than the time-pausing pipe sequences of the original. It's actually a brilliant idea, the process of hacking is much easier in theory, but if you're under fire it can ruin your day real fast.

BioShock 2 is looking simply amazing both visually and in terms of gameplay tweaks. To be perfectly honest we were concerned as to whether 2K Marin would be able to offer us new content without spoiling the splendid formula of the first *BioShock*. But, from what we've witnessed so far, they're striking the perfect balance of old versus new. Thanks to some compelling characters, this new Rapture is opening up before us like a ripe oyster, just as the hidden history of this underwater enigma is becoming deeper as well. Is this shaping up to be a worthy sequel? Well, let's just say we haven't been this impressed since our first Big Daddy face-stomp. **Adam Mathew**

WE SAY

- New yet familiar Rapture
- Dual-wielding rocks
- Addictive plot

OPS IS...
Experiencing rapture



IT'S LIKE...

Point and Click



Slow-pace



PS3 GENRE: ADVENTURE | RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY | DEVELOPER: QUANTIC DREAM

Who needs the Kwik-E-Mart?



HEAVY RAIN

Better pack a parka

Hheavy Rain creator David Jaffe passionately believes *Heavy Rain* is not just a series of quick time events. You know, sequences of pre-scripted animation that are triggered and negotiated by on-screen button prompts. Unfortunately for Jaffe, from a pure gameplay perspective, it is. You do get the opportunity to walk to each one, but your interaction with the game itself is hitting buttons and twirling sticks when instructed. That's how it is for the first few hours, anyway.

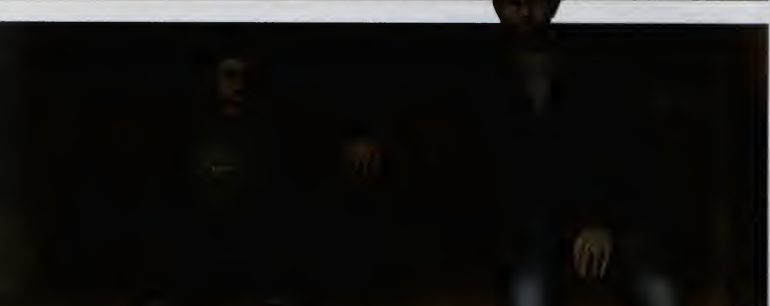
This is not an indictment on *Heavy Rain*; this is an observation. As adventure games go, however, *Heavy Rain* seems like the ultimate evolution. If you could take this game with you back to 1995 and showcase it to a room full of avid point-and-click pundits they'd rain in their pants.

Filing past that many rigid adventure game aficionados would be like pushing through several sickening turnstiles of wedding tackle.

It certainly looks remarkable. The graphics are something to behold, and the animations are top shelf. It's a small thing, but we're not sure

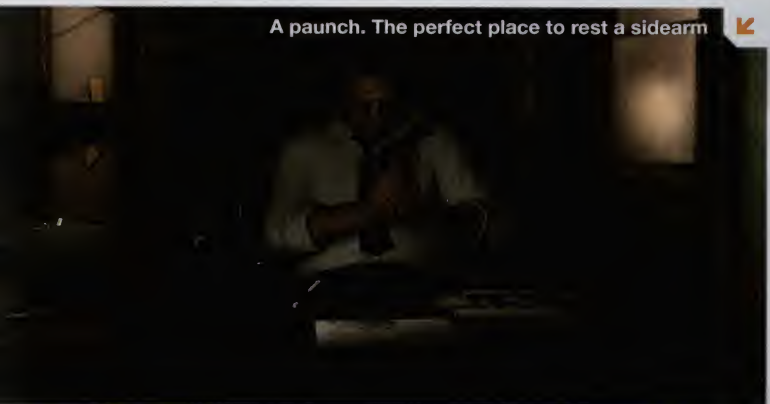
we've ever seen a videogame character simply change direction as convincingly as the ones in *Heavy Rain*. Getting about still feels a little tank-like, like *Resident Evil* (you have to hold R2 in order to walk around the environment), but walking around is really just a means to an end here, like any adventure game. The inability to circle strafe isn't going to cause your character any grief in *Heavy Rain*. The controls aren't relative to the player, rather to the camera – so you'll need to adjust when the perspective shifts (which can be a pain in the sack) – but you'll get used to it.

The ultimate issue many gamers will have with *Heavy Rain* is need. In other words, how many of the things you *can* do in *Heavy Rain* do you actually *need* to do? You *can* go the fridge, grab out a carton of juice, shake it up by waggling the SIXAXIS and take a swig with a delicate tweak of an analogue stick. But, as far as we can tell, the only result of completing this action is the privilege of seeing your on-screen persona quaff some OJ. We feel more than a few gamers may have a hard time justifying the idle time, and the plodding introduction will also undoubtedly frustrate some. The first few levels serve as a tutorial for the rest of the game, but it's a slow burn. The game's first action sequence (an optional fistfight, depending on your decision) doesn't occur until 90 minutes or so in the story. We respect the fact Quantic Dream didn't toss a sex scene in early on with the only intention being duping players to stay on board, but we're concerned about how many will stick it out. That said, we'd be lying if we



"Mum said you *can't* watch *RoboCop*? Your mum says a lot of things"

K



A paunch. The perfect place to rest a sidearm

K

said we weren't intrigued enough to continue, because we played patiently for hours and are very keen to see how the story unfolds.

Heavy Rain is a mature, measured and experimental

experience. It's a student of old-school story-driven adventure games, but unlike anything you've played. Except *Fahrenheit*. But Quantic Dream made that too, so that doesn't count. **Luke Reilly**

WE SAY

- ⬆ Deep narrative
- ⬆ Bold storytelling
- ⬇ Slow start

OPS IS...
Hedging our bets



**BASED ON ONE OF
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VIDEO GAMES OF
ALL TIME**



ON DVD JANUARY 14

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Action
violence



INCOMING

Dead Space 2 | Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days

PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBA | DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS | DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE

KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS

Hey dog, we heard you like days...

Lets turn the honesty up to 'brutal' – not even a winning combination of merc-meets-psychopath (along with *Heat* and *Collateral*-inspired Michael Mann fan-service) was enough to detract from the problems of *Kane & Lynch: Dead Men*. It was a flawed experience with largely forgettable gunplay and idiotic AI, and by-the-numbers level design. However, unlike the amoral protagonists it depicted, it was by no means an irredeemable mess. It was a missed opportunity.

IO Interactive has listened to concerns of critics and has seen fit to issue a take two. *Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days* takes place in Shanghai where Kane has become a troubled wanderer

and Lynch has become a successful underworld figure and even more insane – if that is, in fact, possible. Along with assurances that the controls and core gameplay are being tightened up, IO proudly unveiled an exciting new camera system for the game that mimics the erratic shenanigans of movies like *Cloverfield* and *The Blair Witch Project*.

In addition to this potentially headache-inducing visual design, we have been given word of a new multiplayer mode that will have rabid *Reservoir Dogs* fans salivating. 'Natural Greed' is a backstabbing heist scenario along the same lines as the 'Fragile Alliance' mode of the original game. But this time around there's

an undercover cop in your midst who must stealthily take down your criminal gang from the inside.

Colour us optimistic. **Adam Mathew**

WE SAY

- ↑ Characters still intrigue us
- ↑ Hallucinogenic scenes rock
- ↓ Camera may frustrate

OPS IS...

Trippin' balls, fighting paranoia



PS3 GENRE: HORROR | RELEASE: TBA | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: VISCERAL GAMES

DEAD SPACE 2

In space, no one can hear you be dead

Few games made us void our bowels like *Dead Space* did.

Tiptoeing through the madhouse that was the USG Ishimura, armed with a makeshift selection of tools from 'space Bunnings', was a genuinely

unsettling experience. Why, we even know of certain people that simply refuse to play it at night for more than an hour at a time. True story, featuring *sissies*.

Dead Space 2 picks up three years after the events of the first game. No immediate

explanation is offered for the fate of the Ishimura, the Marker, or the Necromorphs – all you know is you're Isaac Clarke, you're 'safe' on a space station, and you're going cuckoo-bananas. Hallucinations are just the start of your troubles though, for whatever reason the heavily populated colony soon descends into homicidal madness and the necromorphs start crawling out of the Goddamned walls again.

That's right folks, unlike the solitary experience of the original *Dead Space* we'll get the opportunity to watch the crap impacting with the fan, as opposed to slogging through the aftermath. Visceral Games also promises us a cadre of new weapons, hideous new enemies (can you say 'freaky mutated children'?) and for Isaac to actually open his mouth and speak this time around. *Dead Space 2* is coming, and as the event horizon approaches, we can't wait to be sucked in all over again.

Adam Mathew

WE SAY

- ↑ Mind games for the win
- ↑ More NPCs to watch die
- ↓ Sense of isolation lost?

OPS IS...

Shaking in our space boots



"Oh, Tony Tony? I hate that guy. He's filthy, loud and... he's right behind me now, isn't he?"



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: MARCH 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA | DEVELOPER: AMUSEMENT VISION

YAKUZA 3

Fail this mission and we'll need that gaming thumb of yours...

You really don't want to mess with Yakuza. The various gangs that make up the multi-billion dollar Japanese underworld have different origins; some say they are Robin Hood-types descended from ronin samurai, others whisper that they are remnants of bandits called the kabuki-mono (translation: the crazy ones). The real truth of their nature can be found in Sega's cult-favourite Yakuza series.

Yakuza 3 takes a departure from the Tokyo-based antics of the previous Yakuza games and instead sends Kazuma Kiryu and Haruka Sawamura to the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa). Here they must come to the aid of local Yakuza boss Shigeru Nakahara, who is under pressure from the country's government to hand over his landholdings. Like any true gangster, your main objective is to investigate, extort, and bludgeon up a desirable secondary solution to the problem.

From what we've seen so far it's a good old-fashioned action-RPG that's a touch linear and a bit melodramatic, but also packed full of amazing attention to detail and a myriad of quirky side quests. Yakuza 3 is also quite an adult game with politics, sex, alcohol, death and swearing being the order of the day. Sounds good so far, right? If you're reading this, censorship Nazis, keep your bloody hands off. **Adam Mathew**



WE SAY

- ↑ Authentic open environments
- ↑ Impressive visual fidelity
- ↓ Simplistic controls

OPS IS...

Tattooing the release date



Hope you read the instructions...

you wish and your initially simplistic single-slash sword can soon be upgraded in terms of length and armour piercing capabilities. Also of note, you're given the ability to customise your dungeon-crawler using a simple block editor (our hero, 'Klink', was a balding forest elf with a monocle).

Being recovering nostalgialohics ourselves, it's hard not to get enthused by 3D Dot Game Heroes. It's well polished, quirky, and the developers are obviously dedicated to recreating and expanding upon one of the greatest formulas in gaming history. Looking for something different? This may just have the sprite stuff. **Adam Mathew**

WE SAY

- ↑ Unique pseudo-retro visuals
- ↑ Endearing chip tune music
- ↓ Combat too simplistic?

OPS IS...

All about the blocks



PS3 GENRE: RPG | RELEASE: TBA | DISTRIBUTOR: TBA | DEVELOPER: FROM SOFTWARE

3D DOT GAME HEROES

Déjà vu, now in full colour 3D!

Love it, or hate it irrationally because it appeared on a console that predated PlayStation, there's simply no denying that the early Zelda on NES was a landmark event in gaming. It had the perfect blueprint for action-RPG progression, it had music more addictive than chocolate cigarettes, and its sequels subliminally trained a future generation of adulterers to cut another man's grass in order to reap rewards. 3D Dot Game Heroes apes the original Zelda so blatantly, we wonder why the litigation landslide hasn't already started.

Though the game's title "cunningly hides" this information from you, 3D Dot Game Heroes, is a fully 3D realisation of a two dimensional concept. Imagine, if you will, every pixel in an 8-bit Zelda dungeon being represented as a cube, and you're on the right track. The camera can be swung about to whatever angle



Words: Paul Taylor

FINAL FANTASY XIII

The first *Final Fantasy* to be custom built for your high definition console is out in Japan, while the West has to wait just a little while longer. Not *OPS* though. We went to the game's native country, played it and spoke to both its director and producer to find out just what we can expect

The main street of Akihabara, a district in Tokyo, Japan, is peppered with *Final Fantasy XIII* advertising. Also known as Electric Town, or plain Akiba, this district in the second largest economy in the world knows how to sell games. Along the district's prime strip, massive TV screens continuously loop footage of *FFXIII*. Near life-size cardboard cut outs of Snow and Lightning, two of the game's protagonists, funnel people into stores. Billboards featuring Lightning loom over the train lines. There's even a soft drink range of *FFXIII* 'elixirs' for the super keen in a dozen or so different cans. You could say, then, that Japan is gearing up in a big way.

Big titles are often launched on a Thursday and *FFXIII* is no exception, available to the Japanese public December

17. Anecdotal reports say it's common for mass absenteeism to occur as the populace plays the latest game all day. Motomu Toriyama, *Final Fantasy XIII*'s director told us, "We set out to create the best ever *Final Fantasy* as well as presenting the blueprint for future RPGs". Claims like

that lead us to believe Tokyoites may be cashing in their sick days. They're going to need a few of them as well; if you put together all the major cut scenes and simply limited your play time to following the storyline only you'd be playing for roughly 60 hours, according to Toriyama. It's a believable claim.

OPS had access to the European build – all English voices and subtitles – and it's the first time this version has been made available to foreign press. Toriyama and Yoshinori Kitase, the game's producer, were very happy to talk about their latest title, though the powers at Square Enix capped our play time just after the first summon-able power, an Eidolon called Sheva, became available – roughly five hours in. This raised more questions than answers as we'd unlocked a handful of the game's mechanics. Players familiar with the series will probably expect more to be available by this stage, while beginners will be happy taking their time absorbing the world.

It's glorious to look at. You could run through the jargon to describe the effects – bloom, HDR, particle effects – but simply put it's truly lush.

"Because there has been an increase in really graphically impressive games released worldwide," explains Kitase, "the [graphics] team did feel the pressure that [they] would have to be really specifically impressive visual aspects involved in the game."

Each environment we ran through had a different colour temperature with highlighted elements that subtly reflected off the character's face and altered the colour of their clothes. Lake Bresha, a massive expanse of water turned completely into white-blue crystal, gives off an eerie, cold sting. Various pockets have a plume of bright orange and peach crystal have sprung up. Their function is purely cosmetic but they leave a soft warming glow on the entire party. The thing is, you probably won't notice unless you pause and look around.

Although we only saw a fistful of locations, each was richly detailed. "Our art team has referred to a lot of different things," says Toriyama. "A team went to North America and drove around looking for the right sort of view or scene. On the technological side they paid a visit a space museum run by NASA to get inspiration."

The transition between gameplay and cutscene was nearly unnoticeable, the latter reserved for telling the story. "All the visual aspects have evolved because of the high power of PS3," continues Toriyama. "In particular [PS3] really enabled us to express each character's emotions in a more dramatic way. [So too] the facial expressions, and the movements of the eyes [could be animated] in a more detailed way, [as well as] little expressions on the face that cannot be conveyed just

ONCE UPON A TIME

We said that the story in *FFXIII* takes a while to get going, and even then most of it is found in the Datalog, a handy diary or events that gives a substantial amount of background. The story as we know it runs something like this. Warning, there are a couple of tiny, tiny spoilers here.

Humans live on Cocoon, a paradise that hangs in the sky above Pulse, a primitive world. The fal'Cie, a benevolent force who were on Pulse and Cocoon, recently 'awoke' in the town of Bodhum, and turned some humans who got too close to their massive ship – the Pulse Vestige – into l'Cie. These l'Cie became marked with a strange tattoo and had to complete their 'Focus', an unspecified task. Failure to complete this task on time, either by being tardy or dying, turned

a human into Cie'th, a shambling zombie-like creature. If a l'Cie completes his or her focus successfully they're given eternal life by being turned into a crystal-like statue. Hardly ideal.

The Sanctum, a ruling military force, decides that presence of the ship has corrupted the citizens and begins the Purge, 'relocating' Bodhum individuals to Pulse. Turns out they aren't being relocated, but just exterminated instead. Lightning, Snow and another bunch of survivors are fighting against Sanctum and their PSICOM soldiers when they themselves become l'Cie. Thrown in to this is Snow's fiancé, Serah, who is also Lightning's sister. You want to know more? Tune back in this March.

“Although we only saw a fistful of locations, each was richly detailed”

through spoken lines.”

This is evident in the cinematic cutscenes that expose the complicated story (see ONCE UPON A TIME). Though the story runs like a thin trailing fuse of gunpowder, giving little at first, it's carefully punctuated with large explosions to give the experience a kick. Although this sounds like it may meander, it is truly focussed, though getting to a point where you know what's going on will take a while. Kitase told us, “We always were clear about our goal which is to set up a strong storyline and that would be the main focal point of the gameplay. We have never experienced uncertainty about what we should achieve in the end.”

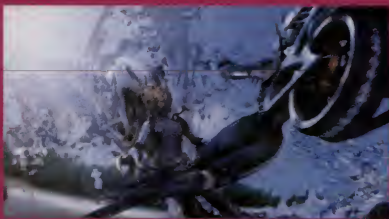
The spark for this fuse is combat. Each group of enemies can be spotted so battles are never random. Depending on the environment though – for example, a bottleneck or boss fight – they may be unavoidable. It pays to hang back and watch their pattern, as if you approach them and they don't spot you, you're able to get a pre-emptive strike, a valuable free hit on all opposing enemies. However, wander in to their cone of vision – represented by a red dot on the mini map – and your character will crouch down, adopting an attack pose. You might be able to run away before the fight begins, but some enemies are tenacious.

Rather than controlling everyone in your party

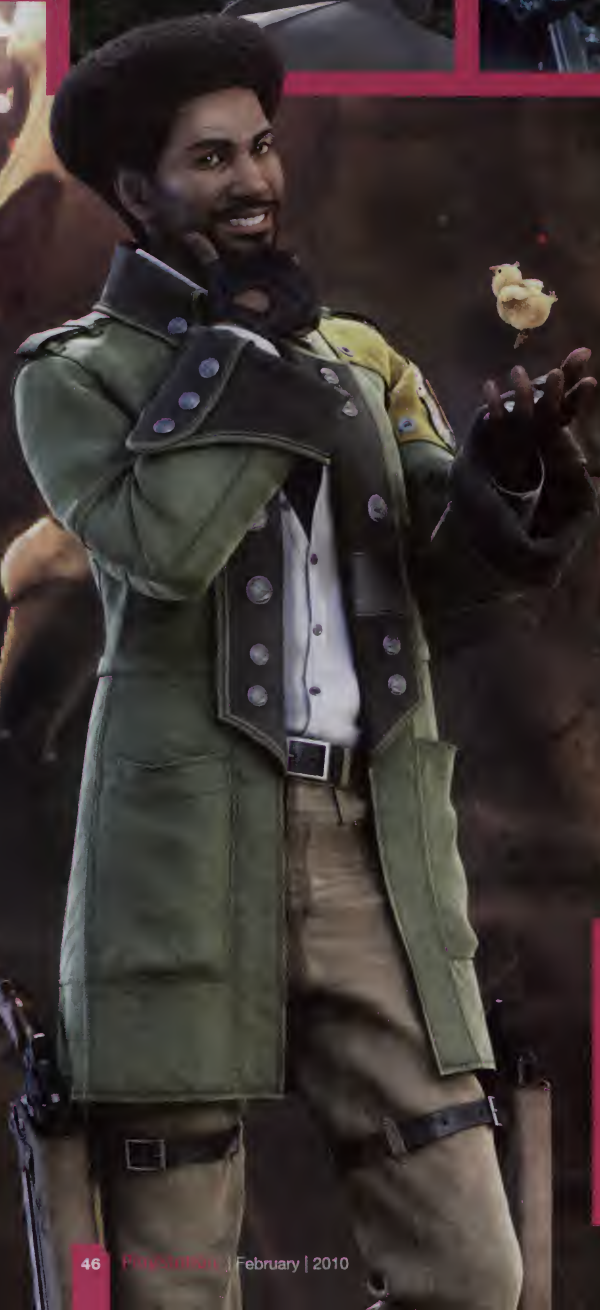
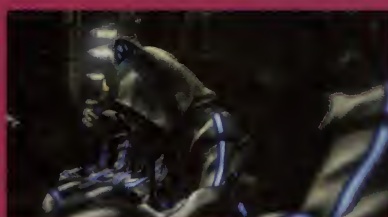
WORLDS APART

The mythology behind *FFXIII*'s story is complex and serves as the backbone for a trilogy of games under the banner of Fabula Nova Crystalis – another PS3 game called *Versus* and a PSP game.

“This Fabula Nova Crystalis comprises three works,” Kitase tells us. “*XIII*, *Versus* and *Agito*. They do not share characters, vehicles or world; they are completely separate, but are stemming from a mythology or crystal ‘myth’ that is the backbone of these completely different stories. So when it comes to *XIII* this mythology has got links to fal'Cie. Almost like a deity, this ‘god’ forces Lightning and other main characters to live with quite unfair destiny, almost doomed if you like, so the mythology itself is not depicted in any of these three titles but actually serves as the background of the stories in those three works. [These three games] could be in the past or could be in the future.”



“It will require patience but the rewards should be huge”



directly, you'll only issue commands to one of your members. Your battle gauge, the ATB, will fill up. Then depending on what you want to do segments will be knocked out. A simple attack or cast of magic may use up one segment of the ATB, while a more complicated manoeuvre may take out two or more. The rest of your party will attack automatically, unaffected by your ATB, via assigned roles that can be changed via the Paradigm party system – simply pressing a shoulder button mid-battle – so that they may go from all-out attack to a more defensive role.

“We wanted to make the battle in *FFXIII* more active, speedier,” says Kitase. “Unlike a [shooter], this is team work so we racked our brain to best express the movements of the remaining two characters in the party. For example in *FFXII* you made the settings prior to the engagement in the battle, but in *XIII* you can change the roles of the [remaining] two characters during the battle depending on the situation you're in, and I think that's quite entertaining.”

Lower-level enemies can be dispatched by letting your teammates do the hard work. In one fight we were victorious by toggling between Relentless Attack – where everyone is on the offensive – and Diversity, an arrangement where one of our party was a medic and the other went at the group of low-level droids with his hand cannons. Strike consecutive blows, filling up the enemy's Stagger bar, and you can inflict an increase in damage. Perform poorly and your

post-battle rating will suffer.

“The quicker or shorter time you require to defeat your enemy the high rating you're likely to get,” explains Kitase. “Also if you have used the chain and break more effectively you're likely to get a better rating, and if you finish off your enemies in a more straightforward and quick manner obviously you're going to get a better rating. You could say it's for self-satisfaction if you like, but on top of that it does give an impact to the item you collect at the end of the battle. Not just simply the higher rating you get the better item you collect. For example, if the player keeps on getting lower rating all the time, it means he or she is not fully capable of operating effectively so items that would support the particular play style would be given out.”

It means the game will adapt for dunces and legends. We frequently racked up a four or five star rating which gave us more items for crafting weapons (a part of the gameplay we're looking forward to exploring) rather than for healing. From our brief hands on, *FFXIII* feels like a streamlined game, less pedantic, more fun. Hunting around for places to trade in your Wicked Fangs and Iron Bangles is made simpler by the fact that shops and save points are one and the same; whether these stores will allow you to craft (mixing together various none-consumable items) is unclear, but you can certainly trade them in for gil – the game's currency – and buy better weapons. “You can

TAKE THE WEATHER WITH YOU

Okay, so there's Snow, who upon first impressions looks like he could fit in at a permanent ski-field, and Lightning, an ex-soldier who is cold, uncaring and looking out for number one. This weather phenomenon got us thinking: An ex-soldier looking out for themselves? Lightning is generally associated with clouds, so is Lightning a re-incarnation of

FFVII's Cloud? Toriyama sets us straight. “Lightning might come across as being a cool, emotionless, character who doesn't hit it off well with her friends, but later on you will find out she is quite feminine inside and quite soft and sensitive, so in that sense her character is actually nothing like Cloud's.” Comprehensively quashed.





DEVPIC

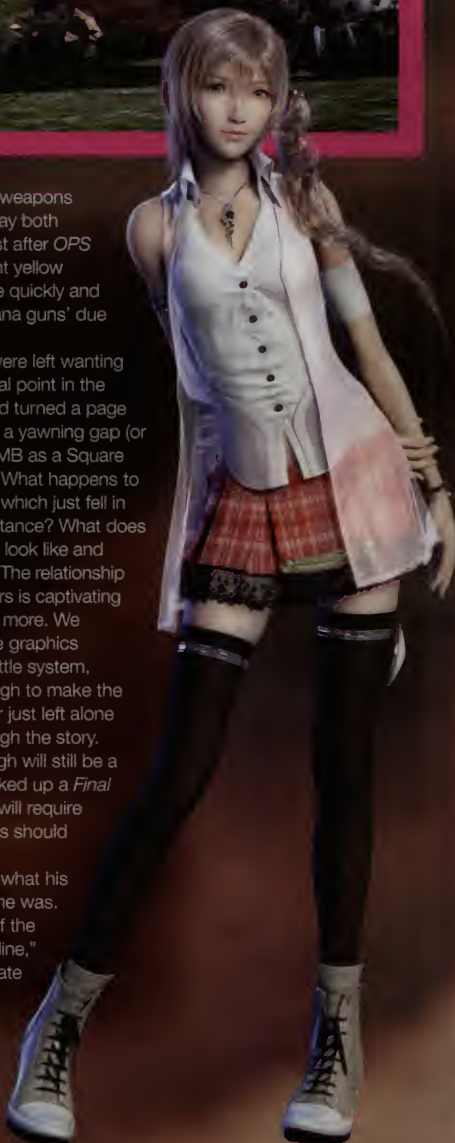
Both Kitase and Toriyama were like many Japanese developers that OPS has met in the past: softly spoken, passionate about their chosen career and productions, and perfectionists. Between them they have 31 years of experience producing RPGs for Square Enix, having had a major hand in the infinitely successful *Final Fantasy VII*, and the first *Final Fantasy* to appear on PS2, X, as well as its sequel *X-2*. They were also good sports, signing a couple of posters for massive *Final Fantasy* fans.



get hold of quite strong weapons from treasure chests," say both Toriyama and Kitase, just after OPS picked up a pair of bright yellow hand-cannons that were quickly and informally dubbed 'banana guns' due to their colour.

Playtime over, we were left wanting to know more at a pivotal point in the storyline, as though we'd turned a page mid-chapter only to find a yawning gap (or in this case the PS3's XMB as a Square Enix rep reset the PS3). What happens to these characters, many which just fell in together due to circumstance? What does the lower world of Pulse look like and what will happen there? The relationship between these characters is captivating to make us want to play more. We were impressed with the graphics and straight-forward battle system, which is malleable enough to make the experience your own, or just left alone so you can power through the story. Though powering through will still be a slog. If you've never picked up a *Final Fantasy* game before it will require patience but the rewards should be huge.

We asked Toriyama what his favourite part of the game was. "I'm particularly proud of the human drama and storyline," he said. "I pursued ultimate human drama in *XIII*." A lofty claim that will be tested this March. **A**



SOME DREAMS ARE WORTH THE FIGHT



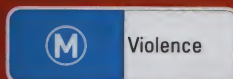
'Worthy of *Rocky*...

The smackdowns are brutal and expertly staged.'

— Ben McEachen, *The Sunday Telegraph*

ON DVD JANUARY 7

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RELATIVITY JACSON ROGUE



DANGER CLOSE

EA resurrects a one-time genre juggernaut and brings it into the 21st Century

Words: James Comey

The new *Medal of Honor* game is a complete reboot for the series, and its creators at Electronic Arts have made some bold decisions in choosing how to redefine an iconic franchise, that, in recent years, had lost its way.

The first change that meets the eye is the setting: this is the first *Medal of Honor* to simulate the battles of the modern era. EA Los Angeles studio head Sean Decker pointed to a number of reasons for the time-skip, but a key factor was making the game more relevant.

"I don't think that a lot of people who play video games today necessarily relate as well to somebody who lived 60, 70, 80 years ago, and fought in World War II. I think that the war that is currently going on is something that people are interested in, and want to understand. I think that movies have generally been the one, lately, to be the first to tell the story. And it would be interesting to have a video game be the first one to tell a story, in a medium.

"*Saving Private Ryan* was a defining piece of media to talk about WWII, or at least one

of them. *Black Hawk Down*, about Somalia. Perhaps it's time for a video game to be one of them, for a different war."

Taking us through the game was executive producer Greg Goodrich, who also compared his team's creation to Spielberg's iconic war movie. "It's a historical-fiction, meaning that this band of fictional characters are operating in a space, or a place, that is based in reality. Authenticity, respect for the soldier... it doesn't matter whether it's in WWII, modern times, or whatever, those tenets of *Medal of Honor* that have always been there will remain, even though the location has changed."

Another thing that's changed is the caliber of soldiers that gamers will get to emulate. Of the two million Americans in uniform, and the 50,000 in SOCOM, only a few hundred at any time are among the ranks of the Tier 1 Operators. If the conventional armed forces are the sledgehammer, then these guys are the scalpel. While key missions in *Medal of Honor* will still feature the kind of 'Big Army' action that we're familiar with, the real meat of

the game concerns the actions of this elusive, unstoppable fighting elite. Tier 1 walk, talk, think, and act differently to regular soldiers, and these differences will set the game apart.

EALA has had the privilege of working closely with the Operators to help fine tune the *Medal of Honor* experience, and Greg was in awe of the role they play in shaping world events. "In this current conflict, Spec Ops, this community, these guys, have REALLY come into their own." Greg referred to a mission early in the war in Afghanistan where a team of five Operators scaled a mountain and used lasers to guide in bombs to smash Taliban positions; it was a daring and devastating attack.

"They've done some amazing things, so we're trying to highlight those experiences."

"And quite frankly, we love beards."

But just who are these guys, these... Operators? Having served as an infantry captain for five years, Sean had a better idea than most of what Tier 1 was, and on this topic he was unequivocal: "These guys are the best. That's all there is to it. I did that for a living, ➔





Afghan saying: "A woman with a beard looks like a man. A man without a beard looks like a woman" **K**



Gillette: The best a man can get **K**

SUPER SOLDIERS

As part of the presentation at EALA, we had the rare opportunity to speak with some Tier 1 Operators. We were forbidden from taking photos, or recording their voices. Their identities were further protected by balaclavas and code names: we had a round-table discussion with 'Poncho,' 'Vandal,' and 'Coop.'

As they spoke about their motivations, their mission, and their methods, it became clear that their ripped physiques and towering intellects had in turn been forged by unshakable willpower. Coop described the Operator's drive to obsessively find and conquer new challenges as something you're born with: "It's like having an appetite that can never be fulfilled."

Yet they were not egomaniacs, and they certainly weren't ideologues. They sought to assist the *Medal of Honor* project not for glory, but to 'steer the ship' of media coverage on a fairer course. As the outspoken Vandal put it, "The public is being force-fed a certain position." By advising on every tiny detail of this production, they can help cast their crucial mission in a better light. Not just to acknowledge those serving now – "More importantly, for the people who have passed. Who gave everything."

"We can honour them."

but it's like the difference between being in the Premier League, and being in... a regional league, or something.

"These guys are the best. They're professional, they're extremely focused. They dedicate their entire lives to this, and it's not like there's a huge paycheck in it for them, or anything like that.

"They do it out of love, and passion. They're fantastic."

Sean wasn't kidding. We had a rare chance to actually meet three of the Operators who had assisted EA with the game, and even with their identities protected by balaclavas you could tell they were not normal men. These guys live without compromise. Some leave the military to meet with incredible success in the private sector, but are drawn back to Tier 1 simply because it is the only job in the world that can truly challenge them.

Most people are satisfied playing their lives on easy. These Operators only play on Nightmare Mode.

While there's no comparing the two careers, Sean has noted a similar effect with elite games programmers. "We had, at DICE, an engineer, who was FANTASTIC. He

was one of the founding members of DICE. He decided that he wanted to go open a hardware store. Nails, and hammers, and all the rest of it. He went, and he did that, and about a year later, he came back. 'It's been fun, it's been interesting, but I'm back, and I'm diving into the code.'"

The Operators advised on every tiny detail of the production, from camouflage patterns, to how they hold their weapons, and even how they speak. For instance, Navy SEALs don't refer to a building as having storeys, but as having 'decks'. The Operators had, and used, the power to veto any aspect they disapproved of. Yet as Greg explained, they intentionally held back when it came to their actual tactics. "We've done a lot of things with them. We've had rehearsals with them. They do it cool enough so it looks and it moves [realistically], but it's not exactly how they do dynamic room entry.

"One of them said at one point: 'I have to assume my enemy is going to play this game, and my enemy is going to see this. So the next time I kick a door down, and flood into this room with a bunch of guys, I don't want him knowing where I'm coming from, or what I'm doing.'

"So we modify it, so it still looks awesome, it's still cool, it's how it's done – but not *exactly*."

The build we saw was only 40% complete; the aim is to get a rough draft in place by Christmas, so the team can spend a good six months iteratively improving the game; polishing the experience so they can 'find the fun.' While the heavily modified Unreal 3 engine will be ported across to PC and 360, *Medal of Honor* is being optimised for the best-selling console on the market. "We're leading on PS3. We love PS3. And we're trying to make it sing. We really are. We have an AMAZING rendering engineer, the guy we have is world class. And I'm not going to give you his name, because he'll be recruited out of here. But he is world class.

"We're really trying to make that platform sing. We absolutely love it. And I'm not just

“Even with [the Tier 1 Operators] identities protected by balaclavas you could tell they were not normal men”

saying that, either.”

The tone of the series has changed; this isn't exactly *Saving Private Ryan* any more. If you want to get a feel for its ambiance, Sean recommends catching *The Hurt Locker*. “It's about people who dismantle bombs. Roadside bombs in Iraq. It's a great movie, but it is literally about them. About what they go through on a day-to-day basis. Their emotions, and so on, and so forth.” The film doesn't delve into whether the invasion of Iraq was justified, because that would only distract from the human element. “Their day-to-day lives are about: there's a BOMB there that I have to take care of. Or, there's a bomb there, and also there's a sniper trying to kill me while I get rid of the bomb, or whatever else. And that's really kind of the focus we're taking as well.”

This is not a game about politics. “When you're in the dirt, you're not really caring about the justifications of the war, or anything else.”

And unlike, say, *America's Army*, it's also not a propaganda tool, either. Greg was adamant on this point. “This game is not about the American military. This game is not about policy, or agendas, or anything like that. This is about a band of characters.” While EALA has relied heavily on military advisers, at no time was any kind of agenda being pushed on them. “It was more like, keeping us honest, and keeping us authentic, and not portraying the soldier in ways that would dishonour him.”

“It's about just doing it right, and having those guys down range nod their head, and say ‘they did it right.’”

If anyone had these game designers on a leash, it was their handlers from EA management. They were supervised at all times to prevent any gameplay secrets from leaking out prematurely. When asked what kind of vehicular action we could expect, Sean chose his words carefully: “You will be able to maneuver and shoot your own vehicles in the game.” The trailer footage already released clearly shows action through the gun sights of Apache attack helicopters and AC-130 gunships; Sean pointed out that players will not be subjected to the anal retentive rigours



Yes, but can it get missile lock on a Lotus Exige?

of a full-on flight simulator. “We'll take you, basically, into the zone. I used to work on flight simulators a long, long time ago, and yeah – you won't have to warm up the engine, and get the right flight lights on.” He joked about how the old Falcon manual was the size of a phone book; that's not the sort of game they're building.

With their *Battlefield* series, DICE has an impressive track record in multi-player gaming. But none of those we spoke to could be baited on what DICE would be bringing to its half of the game, not even the excitable Greg. “We're not talking about multiplayer today, but those guys [DICE] are world class. We love it. It's like Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. Chocolate and peanut butter. Two great tastes that go great together.”

We'd never even seen one of these American confections before, but lucky for us Greg had a bowl of them in his office.

“Take a bite of that, and taste how good that is, and you'll get what it's about.” After explaining how DICE was represented by ➔



PLAYING YAHTZEE

Executive producer Greg Goodrich is quite the fan of Ben “Yahtzee” Croshaw, which is precisely why he hopes that *Medal of Honor* never gets reviewed on *Zero Punctuation*. “We love that guy. That is our number one goal, actually. To have him NOT do one, because we were okay.”

RECOMMENDED READING

If you want a better understanding of the war's mind-set, the Tier 1 Operators we spoke with suggested reading *Gates of Fire: An Epic Novel of the Battle of Thermopylae*. It's the original story of the 300 Spartans, before Frank Miller jazzed it up.

the peanut butter core, and that EALA was the chocolate coating, Greg paused. "Maybe we need a better analogy. But the idea is that two studios coming together, put as much content and quality into one box as humanly possible. It allows them to focus, it allows us to focus."

The softly-spoken senior creative director Richard Farrelly agreed. "Too often, multiplayer becomes an afterthought."

Greg chimed back in. "Single player becomes an afterthought. Either way, depending on which way the team is [leaning]. This way, we can both go to our strengths, and just give a box of a whole lotta goodness." Specifically, we were assured that the single-player campaign would be substantially longer than the four to five hours of action included with *Modern Warfare 2*.

Whatever you have in mind, *Medal of*

Honor is likely to defy your expectations. Sean considers this a key selling point. "I think you'll find that the things that you'll encounter in the game, and the tactics that the AI use, will feel different. At the end of the day, it's still somebody trying to shoot you. But the way that they look and feel, and the tactics that they use, and the methods they use – IEDs. Not something you really encounter in a WWII game too much. Those are the types of things that you're going to run into."

But for all the gritty trappings of the War on Terror, the core values of the franchise will not be tampered with. "*Medal of Honor* comes from a particular place. There are certain liberties you can't take."

Sean pointed out that in sharp contrast to the liberties taken by the *Modern Warfare* series, there are aspects of *Medal of Honor*

➤ "Are we shooting people or what?"

Specifically, we were assured that the single-player campaign would be substantially longer than the four to five hours of action included with *Modern Warfare 2*

MOH 2: VICTORIA CROSS?

The Australian Special Air Service Regiment was involved in a variety of crucial events during the conflict in Afghanistan, particularly 2002's Operation Anaconda. Signalman Martin Wallace of the Australian 152nd Signals Squadron (signals support for the SASR) was awarded the Australian Medal of Gallantry after he and another SASR liaison officer moved to assist wounded troops under fire and remained with them for 12 hours until evacuated. This, plus the actions of Aussie SASR soldiers during the Battle of Takur Gar who coordinated devastating air strikes to prevent al-Qaeda fighters from overrunning downed helicopters and stranded US troops (the SASR soldiers had earlier infiltrated the area undetected as part of a long-range recon mission), earned the commander of the Australian SASR force in Afghanistan the US Bronze Star for his unit's "outstanding contribution to the war on terrorism."

Executive producer Greg Goodrich remarked that he had nothing but the utmost respect for allied special forces such as our own SAS troops. If he's subordinated to the series after *Medal of Honor* is done, he has every intention of opening up the franchise to include Aussies and everyone else fighting against world terror.

"It's not about an American medal. This is not about America's Army. This is about honour and respect for the soldier."

"Down the line, I would love nothing more than to open it up, and have *Medal of Honor* be about all soldiers, men and women. Worldwide. Whether it's Tier 1, or whatever. I would love nothing more than to see us as a company, as an organisation, on this franchise, open it up."

Nice one.

that will never change – he compared the evolution of the series to James Bond. "*Casino Royale* was: different actor, different director, different writer, and so on, and so forth, and they were taking it to a new kind of tone. But at the same time, all of the same elements were there. It was still the British Secret Service, he still had a couple of cool little gadgets, he still wowed the women, there were still the car chase scenes. There were pieces that were hallmarks to the franchise that you really can't stray away from, because they are what makes the franchise. But there are so many things that you can infuse into it, and wrap around it to make it fresh and new again."

Think J.J. Abrams's *Star Trek*, or Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*. "That's how we're approaching it." Good choice. **A**



Knock, knock **R**



It's just like *MX vs ATV*, except Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are trying to kill you.





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The votes have been tallied. The results are in. The inaugural *Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia* Awards have been decided. The winners will be showered with praise. The losers will be taunted and booed until our throats are sore. What are you waiting for? Read on!



BEST WORST GAME

LEISURE SUIT LARRY: BOX OFFICE BUST

A game as remarkably awful as *Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust* comes along once, maybe twice, per generation. *Box Office Bust* is the result of a very special series of severe mistakes – so severe, in fact, that you begin to wonder if anyone at Team 17 had any interest in this project whatsoever. You could make a better game than this by accident. Deciding which parts of *Box Office Bust* are worse than others is like trying to choose whether you'd prefer to be shot or stabbed – ultimately pointless and equally painful. It's all bad. The graphics, the controls, the design, the script, the sound – all of these key elements are just dire. It's a truly horrible experience, every excruciating second. Don't for a

second assume it's so bad it'd be hilarious to try. *Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience* is probably the worst piece of shit to ever hit the silver screen. You wouldn't watch it to see how bad it is. *Box Office Bust* is no different. *Box Office Bust* is the most-hated PS3 game this generation on Metacritic. It's so overwhelmingly abhorred that its critical average of 17 is just a fraction over half that of the next most-hated. Think about that. The consensus amongst professional videogame reviewers the world over is that *Box Office Bust* is approximately twice as crap as the second-worst game available on PS3.

This game is uniquely bad. An amazing new low for this generation.

RUNNERS-UP

KING OF FIGHTERS XII

Admirers of this trollop need to grab a monkey wrench and lever their hands off this decrepit carcass.

CROSS EDGE

NIS (the developer) didn't phone this one in – it mailed it in. Every benchmark of excellence has been missed.

MOST GRATUITOUS USE OF VISIBLY ERECT NIPPLES

FAIRYTALE FIGHTS



“Fairytale Fights retains it (by a nipple)”

Fairytale Fights, a quirky ultra-violent cartoon brawler destined for no commercial success whatsoever, features some extraordinarily pointy nipples on its interpretation of the Naked Emperor. The advertising campaign, featuring real-life porn starlet Krissy Lynn as Little Red Riding Hood, wasn't short on boobs either. *The Saboteur* made a very late case to snatch this category, with the opening sequence of the game basically just a vehicle to get a cavalcade of tits up on screen as quickly as possible – but *Fairytale Fights* retains it (by a nipple).



MOST EXPLOSIONS IN THE SHORTEST AMOUNT OF TIME

RED FACTION: GUERRILLA

Tooled up with a bunch of timed charges that handily stick to anything – vehicles, buildings, gas tanks, people – from the moment your boots hit the red dirt it's not so surprising that in this post-GTA age a player's first thoughts turn to destruction at the earliest opportunity. And the grander the better. That hefty hammer Mason

stuffs into his jacket is also a magnet for nicking the corners of gas tanks, sending anyone foolish enough to do so sky high in a blue-green plume. Consider your hammer and charges are like your arms and legs; time between each boom is measured in milliseconds. And we haven't even mentioned the rocket launcher...



MOST ORIGINAL

BORDERLANDS

Trying to categorise *Borderlands* is like trying to juggle a potato, a chainsaw and a kitten. You can do it, but the result isn't quite right. It's a shooter, but it's also a role-playing game, and it does neither of those conventionally due to it containing literally millions of guns with impossible but laudable combinations – a shotgun with acid shells? Find it, it's yours – and a real-time damage system that shaves or slices points of health

from a foe depending on how good a shot you are.

While it smashes together genres, it also welds chunks of movies. Part *Mad Max*, a touch *Indiana Jones* but also like *Star Wars* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Like a DJ it takes the source material to make something brand new. Oh, and it also stars a neurotic, singing robot with more heart than anything from *The Wizard of Oz*.

RUNNERS-UP

THE SABOTEUR

The gameplay itself is really a hodgepodge of several different open-world titles, but the experimental (and dynamic) use of the colour versus black and white is bold and often quite remarkable.

BRÜTAL LEGEND

A comedy adventure set in heavy metal netherworld, where the chords you play on your mighty axe are spells, the beasts that roam the land are half chrome, and Ozzy Osborne will pimp your hot rod.



BEST ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

It was tough not to feel our loins stir when that familiar theme kicked in the moment the menu screen booted. Greg Edmonson's stirring score is one of the best this generation. Using the Skywalker session orchestra Edmonson has crafted a rich, rousing and wonderfully layered array of background

music that suits the cinematic sensibilities of *Uncharted 2*, and the *Uncharted* series, perfectly. It's easily shoulder to shoulder with the likes of Harry Gregson-Williams' work on *Metal Gear Solid* and Michael Giacchino's contributions to *Medal of Honor: Frontline* and the original *Call of Duty*.


RUNNERS-UP

BRÜTAL LEGEND

The original score by Tim Schafer's long-term collaborator Peter McConnell (*Grim Fandango* and about a billion *Star Wars* games) mixes orchestral and metal music into one kick-arse soundtrack.

LITTLEBIGPLANET (PSP)

A good soundtrack matches the movement of the pixels to maximise immersion, and LBP does it with aplomb. It's a gentle platformer, though not without its moments, and the tunes match this to a T.



BEST ENDING

MODERN WARFARE 2

Modern Warfare 2 is a rollicking summer blockbuster of a game that grabs hold of you and doesn't let go until the last second. A high-speed rubber raft chase, an epic man versus helicopter stoush, a massive drop over a raging waterfall, a groggy chase through a desert crash site armed with nothing but a knife... *Modern Warfare 2*'s dying minutes were masterfully staged. Infinity Ward truly succeeded in leaving us breathless for those closing moments – because we really didn't know how it'd pan out. Just like a quality film director, the IW crew left us guessing all the way. Trying to shank Shepard only to be tossed on the ground and stuck with his blade was shocking. When Shepard levels his revolver you see the cylinder begin to rotate as he squeezes the trigger. You truly do think this could be the end – after all, *Modern Warfare 2* had

already killed the player character *three times*. Then Price appears, and the shot misses. But even he seems he might be bested here. You crawl for a dropped pistol. Shepard kicks it away, and stomps on your face. Straddling Price, Shepard punches him in the face. Punch, punch, punch. You're out of options and your screen is fading. Then your hand around the knife in your chest twitches. You pull it out, and twirl it in your palm. Shepard gets less than a second to spot it before it buries itself into his eye socket. But Price isn't moving, and neither are you. Is *this* it? The screen fades, but Price jerks and you're alert again. No. Price and Soap aren't dead – because there are still people left to kill. The end. *For now*. Oh yeah, spoiler alert. Come on, that was your fault. The category is called Best Ending. Seriously, what did you expect? Bah.



BEST TUNES

DJ HERO

While many of the tunes here could be considered massively commercial – Queen's 'Another One Bites The Dust', Gwen Stefani's 'Hollaback Girl', Gorillaz's 'Feel Good, Inc.' – their mix with whatever song guest DJs have used and folded together produces something that is more than its parts, and will appeal to the most hardcore indie fanboy. Under different circumstances some of the mixes here could have been absolute chart-toppers – how many millions of dollars would *DJ Hero*'s 'U Can't Touch This' vs 'Ice Ice Baby' mix have made 15 years ago? The fact

that every mix here is unique to *DJ Hero* more than justifies its existence.

Whether you're playing or listening, the music from the first track to the last makes you feel good – and isn't that what a good DJ and his or her box of records should do? It's surprising how well every mix works in collaboration with the rest: *DJ Hero* doesn't just dominate one genre. Some punters see this as a folly, but really it should be considered as being a 10-course taste test; filling, nutritious and yet still leaves you begging for just one more round. It belongs at your house, pronto.

RUNNERS-UP

THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

A catalogue of classics from one of the most-revered rock 'n' roll acts in history. Is there anyone who doesn't recognise nearly all these songs?

GUITAR HERO: METALLICA

The best *Guitar Hero* soundtrack so far. A ton of tracks from metal masters Metallica that, most importantly, are great fun to play due to their complexity.



MOST UNMARKETABLE NAME

IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

A brand that means nothing to console gamers that also happens to be the name of an obscure WWII Russian fighter-bomber. Not exactly the commercially friendliest string of words to chuck on a box. *IL-2*

Sturmovik: Birds of Prey is such a great game it's a shame to see it lumbered with such a long-winded and bargain-bin sounding moniker. It's far, far better than the wonky name suggests.



BEST LOCAL MULTIPLAYER

FIFA 10

Remember hearing that line: 'Life's about quality, not quantity'? Whoever it was that told you that, go kick them in the shins, as they've obviously never played *FIFA 10*.

FIFA 10 maximises the PS3's limit on controllers – up to and including seven – so that it allows for you and six of your mates sitting around the one telly, screaming at and along with each other after each spectacular

play and every hard-won goal.

It's the obvious choice as *FIFA*'s had this capability this since *08*, and there aren't many shooters or racing games that do more than two players (or four at a pinch) at the one time. Plus, this year's revision is just so damn deep and refined that it could easily take out an award for best sports game. The question is, do you have enough real-life friends up for it?

RUNNERS-UP

MODERN WARFARE 2

We get so many letters bemoaning how games lack splitscreen. Solution to your ills: fire this up, grab three mates, choose multiplayer and prepare to split your screen four ways. Shooters have barely done this since *TimeSplitters*.

LEGO ROCK BAND

An incongruous combination filled with the charm of *LEGO* and the renowned mechanics of *Rock Band*, making it a gem for all ages. It's not often we can say that sincerely. There aren't many better ways four people can have this much fun on one TV.

BEST TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT

GRAN TURISMO (PSP)

There's loads to be wowed by here, and it makes for a list that should make other titles envious. It's gorgeous to look at, running at a silky smooth frame rate. It has a full library of sound effects and in-game songs that work perfectly with a decent set of headphones. It also has a tonne of cars that have done history proud, and if you download it from the PSN it takes up a smidge over a gig's worth of space on your memory

stick. Despite the small screen and lack of championships, this is a full-blown GT title that puts other racers to shame.



THE HIGHWAY TO THE DANGER ZONE AWARD FOR INEXCUSABLE LACK OF KENNY LOGGINS

TOM CLANCY'S HAWK

The absence of Kenny Loggins' ode to the Air Force from Ubisoft's high-flying adventure didn't come as much of a surprise, *but that doesn't mean we have to like it*. Yes, 'Highway to the Danger Zone' wouldn't have exactly suited the straight-laced Tom Clancy tone, but maybe that's everything that's wrong with games today.

They're too uptight. Why can't we make videogames like we made '80s movies? Why?

Don't tell us you couldn't have got the 'Top Gun Anthem' either – it's already appeared in a game as DLC for *Guitar Hero III*. Excuse us while we air guitar and high-five each other (shirtless). Who's up for volleyball?

“Excuse us while we air guitar and high-five each other (shirtless). Who's up for volleyball?”



MODERN WARFARE 2

Never mind that this is just one third of an excellent package. The multiplayer mode takes the foundation of *COD4* and opens it up to customisation, from the small things like the hundreds of emblems and titles to show off, the familiar create-a-class, to the killstreaks and insane depth of weapon combinations. It's surreptitiously a game for show offs, but it stirs curiosity in the lower ranked players – just how do you unlock that AK-47 with shotgun attachment? Although you

need to work hard it also rewards for incidental but cool moves, leaving you encouraged to play more and more.

Egomaniacs are served, but so is everyone else as this is a game of yin and yang with deathstreaks, balanced maps and more defensive options like the riot shield and tactical insertion marker. Cleverly, games no longer stop mid sentence when a host leaves but transfer to another console albeit with a short break. Fluidity rules. *Modern Warfare 2* kicks arse.

RUNNERS-UP

RED FACTION: GUERRILLA

Like a shooter, but in third person, this is bedlam. It's all due to mad power-ups and cool maps where something or someone is being torn to shreds, literally or metaphorically, all the time.

KILLZONE 2

What impresses us here is 32 players online in one the best PS3 exclusives. It's also balanced, like rock-paper-scissors, and promotes teamwork rather than a group of individuals.



THE NINJA IN THE RAINBOWS AWARD FOR THE GAME THAT CAME OUT OF NOWHERE

INFAMOUS

Sony was not making much noise at all about *inFamous* prior to its release. Indeed, the first time we even got our hands on playable code in this country was a mere matter of weeks before its retail release. It's usually a telling sign that somebody has something to hide, but every so often things just slip between the cracks. There wasn't much brewing for original *Uncharted*

before it came out either – Sony was actually a bit busy backing the wrong horse with *Lair* at that period. It's a similar story for *inFamous*. We had cautiously expected a none-too-spectacular open-world adventure we'd quickly forget. What we got was a top quality title that deserved far more respect than we'd have guessed. Bravo, Sucker Punch.



BEST SINGLE LEVEL

GHOSTBUSTERS: STAY PUFT BATTLE

Things had started well for *Ghostbusters*. The music, the in-jokes, the presentation. We were instantly in love. The first level – a haunted jaunt through the Sedgewick Hotel – was a blast. But it was nothing compared to the second level. Indeed, the rest of the game was nothing compared to the second level. There was some great stuff later on down the track (like the New York library) but *Ghostbusters* peaked when Stay Puft (re)appeared. It was all good. Sheparding Ecto-1 down a debris-laden boulevard while Stay Puft laid waste to the neighbourhood.

Seeing him amble around through gaps between buildings. Engaging in a running battle with the giant marshmallow man in Times Square, our particle streams leaving burning trails across his belly. Having a huge white fist smash through the wall of the stairwell we were scaling and watching Stay Puft peer through the hole. Battling him as he climbed up the side of a skyscraper, eventually sending him toppling off to his fate as a pile of sticky white goo. We can still see the sad look on his face as he fell. This was a truly remarkably crafted level.

RUNNERS-UP

UNCHARTED 2: Mountain truck chase

Leaping from speeding truck to speeding truck as they zoom up a snowy mountain, firing at the pursuing 4x4s – this was pure excitement.

KILLZONE 2: Suljeva mine train

The location wins it: a rocketing goods train whose unfriendly terrain is a tug of war for territory. It's industrial, manic and rock hard. Train levels rule.



BEST CO-OP MULTIPLAYER

BORDERLANDS

Loads of single-player shooters offer the chance for two players to go at the adventure with a mate. A, singular, just one more. *Borderlands*, though, goes two better: two-player splitscreen for the couch-bound, and four-player online that promotes teamwork but also allows for drop-in, drop-out. Flakers and obsessive types can now work together.

It's also remarkably funny and egalitarian in co-op, making sure that you and your friend's stats are levelled up simultaneously. Rather than you

and your cohort being clones of one another your character strengths must be implemented, creating your own mini-stories within the over-arching storyline. The opportunities for tackling a problem are only limited by your willingness – and just how much you really want that awesome incendiary sniper rifle. Any disputes over lucrative swag, or any underlying relationship troubles, are settled via a duel rather than an informal melee to the back of the skull. Brilliant.

Buy four copies now.

RUNNERS-UP

MODERN WARFARE 2

Its bespoke co-op mode is just a joy to play, forcing you and a friend to work hard against the CPU. The rewards are more stages to smash, and the amount of original content and remixes of familiar locations are perfect 'what-if' scenarios.

RESIDENT EVIL 5

It shows how much the horror series has changed. One of the sweetest moments is timing melee attacks on a 'zombie' so that they bounce between Chris and Sheva 'til it's little more than ground beef. Tricky, but glorious. It may have polarised fans, but it's still tops.



THE BOTTOM OF METACRITIC AWARD

FOR THE GAME THAT WE DIDN'T LIKE
AS MUCH AS MOST OTHER PEOPLE

COLIN MCRAE: DIRT 2

Point your browser to metacritic.com/games/platforms/ps3/dirt2 and scroll down, down, down the list of 60-odd critics. Past the clenched fist of 90-odds, the sack of 80-somethings and the one 75, and there in yellow, at 70 (for 7 out of 10), is your favourite magazine. It's a curse to think that maybe we got it wrong, so we tried again. Still

pretty, still solid to drive, but there's sod-all charm (or snow) – all replaced by obnoxious Yanks. Nope, we were right and still are. We don't have a problem with Ken Block – after all, he'll be partnering with Aussie Chris Atkinson in the WRC this year – but this game misrepresents itself. It's a game to get angry about and we're confused why so many were fooled.



MOST ADDICTIVE

SKATE 2

There wasn't a game all year that we made more time for around its release than *Skate 2*. The improved city had more killer spots than you could ever hope to skate – particularly when we got so obsessed with just a few favourites. We sat around one afternoon, just dropping from the top of the dam, the Murderhorn, and screaming down the drain until we bailed. We did that for *five hours*, passing the controller. And *then* we found the Boneyard drop, *and* the drop from the top of the E on the San Vanelona sign. We were Bobby

Brown, and *Skate 2* was our big bag of blow. We can think of any game this side of *GTAIV* where you can lose so many hours fooling around and experimenting 'off-mission'. This kind of freedom scares some gamers. If Internet blowhards are anything to go by, people with reduced imaginations get bored unless games constantly allocate them things to do. It's no accident, however, that our most addictive game of 2009 (like *GTAIV*, the most addictive game of 2008) encourages you to make your own fun. Here's the playground, go nuts.

RUNNERS-UP

BATTLEFIELD 1943 (PSN)

This kept many an OPS staffer up until late. Simple, cheap fun that just keeps you coming back for more and more and more. This really is an incredible little package for a purely online-only title.

MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE

There was a period there where James Cottey simply could not be removed from this game. We're not even sure if you can actually even finish it. Does it end? Ever?

MOST EXCITABLE DEVELOPER

RANDY PITCHFORD



Ladies and gentlemen, the always-enthusiastic Randy Pitchford: President Of Gearbox, head honcho of the award-winning *Borderlands* (see above) during various OPS interviews:

"Oh! Someone did a *Borderlands LittleBigPlanet* level! I can't wait to check that out! I gotta see how good that is – it's probably terrible. But it doesn't matter – it could be the worst thing ever, but the fact that somebody did that is so cool. I hope more people do that."

"There's something about zombies that I love. We should do something with zombies."

"We want lots of shotguns, we want lots of rocket launchers."



THE YUL BRYNNER AWARD FOR THE MOST SURPRISING USE OF DEAD CELEBRITIES

GUITAR HERO 5

In 1986 Yul Brynner appeared in a commercial for the American Cancer Society urging people not to smoke. Thing is, he was so smitten for cigies he'd already died of lung cancer in 1985. Surprising use of a dead guy, effective ad. Also surprising, but not exactly effective, Kurt Cobain and Johnny Cash in *Guitar Hero 5*. Nothing new here – Jimi Hendrix appeared in the last one, and he's been comprehensively dead for quite some

time. The key thing, though, is Hendrix only sings his own songs. Cobain and Cash will sing anything you toss at them – and that includes imported *Band Hero* songs. There's something about seeing Kurt Cobain and Johnny Cash mincing around singing 'YMCA' that just derails the whole experience. It sounds amusing, but it demonstrates a truly surprising lack of respect for the creative minds that supply the very fuel *Guitar Hero* runs on. It's just odd.



BEST INNOVATION

FIFA 10 – 360° MOVEMENT

Why did it take so long for this to happen? It sounds like a subtle change, but it isn't. The difference between being able to run in 16 directions and being able to run in any direction is vast.

Curved runs, tiny changes in angles – it all makes for a far more organic looking, and feeling, sports experience. It takes a few minutes to get used to it, but you can never go back.

RUNNERS-UP

NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

Heartbeat and blurred vision
Cabin view in *Need for Speed SHIFT* is probably the best around thanks to the effects crashes have on the driver.

BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

A Batman game that doesn't suck at all

Kudos, Rocksteady. We don't know how you pulled it off, but you've kicked the trend to the curb.

BEST SOUND



NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

Omnivores: imagine a steak, that's tender, juicy, and just melts as soon as it hits your tongue. It's more than a meal, it's a sensation. Then there's nutmeat, a pale imitator that gets the job done and would be passable if you didn't know better. *SHIFT* is a cut of Wagyu, leaving others picking bits of stale bread and walnuts from between their teeth.

SHIFT's developers did more than just record cars: they crashed them,

too, making a whole library of metal on metal and metal on concrete for them to work with. Cars throb and pulse, tyres cling to the asphalt like a cat on a curtain and screech in protest at the abuse. And it really comes alive in the cockpit viewpoint. Sending your million-dollar baby into anything but sweet oxygen means your driver sucks up his own lungful of air and his pounding heart overpowers the riot of cars passing by. High drama indeed.

RUNNERS-UP

MODERN WARFARE 2

Quality dialogue and great sound bites between stages create believable characters. Matched with an authentic symphony of epic effects, this is a class act from go to woah.

IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

The visceral sounds of dogfighting have never been done better. You'll flinch as your wings are torn up and duck as enemy fighters buzz past so close you could spit on them.



THE RAIN ON YOUR PARADE AWARD FOR BIGGEST EBAY SPOILER

MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2

So, y'know that 'near mint' Dreamcast copy of *Marvel vs Capcom 2* you had under lock and key? Nearly worthless, friend. Your market has just shrunk drastically due to three letters: P, S and N. This is essentially the same game, but with everything unlocked, and it's

in widescreen, AND you can play it online. So, all the joy and then some, but without the hassle of having to hook it up to your monitor with a VGA cable. And you also have a usable d-pad that doesn't turn your thumb into a big, purple, angry blister.

MOST SPECIAL SPECIAL EDITION



MODERN WARFARE 2: PRESTIGE EDITION

The only choice. It came with night-vision goggles. *Working night-vision goggles* that allow you to literally see at night. When it's dark. Night-vision. Goggles. Ridiculous? Somewhat. Awesome? Yes.



MOST Hardcore

STREET FIGHTER IV

It's not the controls, per se. Everything's either quarter circles, holds and dashes, or a clever riff on light-medium-heavy punches and kicks. Nor does it have to battle with 3D or 2.5D, steps in and out of half-planes or different terrain. It's balls-out hardcore because you can absolutely shut someone else down by perfect timing, cancelling supers and implementing force breaks, no

matter what character you're using. It's hardcore because it takes hours of practice to get it right, and button mashes will have no clue about why they're being schooled. Heavy attacks, like Ken's Shoryuken, aren't necessarily the best, so knowing how to alter a play style is going to take lots of raw thumbs and palms.

Fans of Streeties talk in a different language too. That's hardcore, man.

RUNNERS-UP

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING

This unforgiving war simulator, where you can bleed to death, needs a lot of patience to get it right. Otherwise you'll spend more time looking at your corpse than enemy locations.

UFC 2009: UNDISPUTED

If you haven't been online and got to grips with this, you're gonna be shit out of luck. It has controls for grappling on the floor, for twisting, kicking, punching, and this spectacular game will make you submit until you have it down pat.



THE MEN IN WOMEN'S JEANS AWARD

FOR MOST IRONIC SOUNDTRACK ANOMALY

BRÜTAL LEGEND

Riddle us this, readers. Why is the best-selling track from the official *Brütal Legend* soundtrack on iTunes the joke song from the beginning on the game? You know, that terrible emo/nu-metal hybrid designed to be so awful it feels good to see a heavy metal monster rise from another

dimension and basically roar at the band responsible until their heads simply fall off. With all the original metal on there it's a little too weird to us that all people want is the whiny, top-40-esque rubbish. Way to prove music has lost the plot people. If metal is dead, these people killed it.

BEST DLC



ROCK BAND

As of December 1, 2009, Harmonix confirmed that there are over 1000 songs available for the *Rock Band* platform through on-disc songs, imported track packs, and downloadable content. In 2009 alone Harmonix released over 400 songs as DLC. Think about that. That's over a song per day, for a year. There's no other series that delivers DLC this regularly. Importantly, there's seriously no end in sight. If there's any game

that just keeps on giving, this is it. Foo Fighters, Pearl Jam, Guns 'N Roses, Nirvana, Queen, Wolfmother and over 150 other bands and artists – from big hitters to small-time acts – had content made available to download and play. Over 60 million downloadable song purchases had been made through the *Rock Band* music store service until October 2009. This is the premier music game available. Know that.

RUNNERS-UP

BURNOUT PARADISE

A striking combination of free content, cool stuff, gimmicks and even a whole new island to explore – it's also competitively priced. We just wonder if there'll ever be a true disc-based sequel. With Criterion currently working on a *NFS* title, maybe not.

CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

A whole mess of extra maps were unleashed for this, but the best are the additional Nazi Zombie ones. Internet elitists still go out of their way to rubbish Treyarch, but they sold over 11 million copies of *World at War*. Treyarch: 1, posers: 0.



FUNNIEST GAME

BRÜTAL LEGEND

"Stay tight around me like a rock 'n roll sphincter! You guys know what a sphincter is?"

Brütal Legend is the funniest game of the year, hands-on. Part of it is thanks to Jack Black's comedy

delivery skills, and the rest of it is down to a riotous script. Punters have since had their say about the 'hidden' RTS elements and so forth, but we maintain *Brütal Legend* is a great game. Personality goes a long way.

RUNNERS-UP

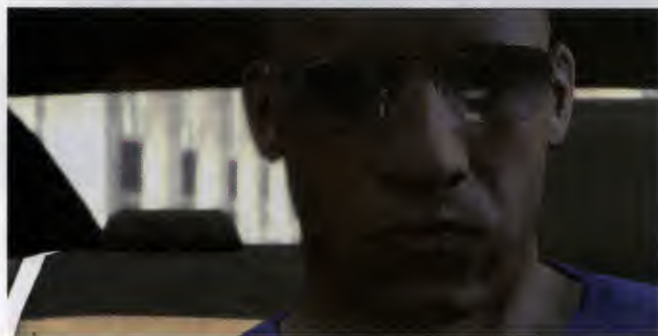
GHOSTBUSTERS

"New people die every day."

EAT LEAD

"Nice shooting! But it's not like you're PAYING for that ammo. Feel free to use more."

“ ‘Stay tight around me like a rock 'n roll sphincter. You guys know what a sphincter is?’ ”



WORST VOICE ACTING

WHEELMAN

For a game that wanted to promote fast, kinetic, action, Vin Diesel sounded like he'd taken a fistful of ketamine and was about to zone out for a fortnight on the couch. There's no change in pace, very little tone difference, and no emotion. If Diesel's performance were wheeled in to the emergency

department it would be pronounced D.O.A. The rest of the cast were just as dire – over-played Spanish accents ahoy!. It's not just that though: the script is flatter than last week's roadkill, so trying to put anything in to this is like trying to inflate a busted balloon.

Shonky as.

MOST MANLY GAME

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

Huge blokes at the peak of their physical condition, dripping with sweat and wearing nothing but shorts. Those in search of a cheap gag would toss in a quip regarding sexual preference at this stage, and you could nearly be forgiven. But there are no two ways about it – *Fight Night Round 4* is the manliest game of 2009. Not because of how well it renders the chests of men

at their prime, but because of the way it perfectly captures the spirit of boxing and the thrill of violent competition like no other sports game before it. In the wild mature, evenly matched males fight for dominance, territory and mating rights. You'd be hard-pressed to argue boxing is much different. Now we just need some Danny Green DLC. How about it, EA?

RUNNERS-UP

ROGUE WARRIOR

Beards. Mickey Rourke. Dead commies. Every curse combination you can think of. It's an '80s action movie come to life. Dick Marcinko is one hard motherpusbucket. It's a shame the game's so appalling.

MODERN WARFARE 2

If this was set two decades ago with more swearing we wouldn't need *Rogue Warrior* here, but it still proves combat is man's world. Price and Soap are the toughest SOBs in games right now.

BEST VOICE ACTING

UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

Naughty Dog runs story and cinematic production more like film and TV than traditional videogames. Bringing actors in for auditions, call-backs – it's all taken very seriously. The result? Organic, perfectly delivered dialogue – a far cry from the stilted rubbish you get all too often elsewhere. It helps

that the depth of the animation system – from posture, subtle movements and facial complexity – is second to none. The behaviour of the characters onscreen works in conjunction with the Hollywood-level voice acting and combines to deliver the best voice-acting in gaming.



CHEAPEST BOSS

SETH – STREET FIGHTER IV

Dear Capcom, Seth is a dick. He's the cheapest boss in the history of cheap bosses. There is no joy in finishing *Street Fighter IV*, only grim satisfaction born of pure, unadulterated spite. Is Seth a joke? Did you guys deliberately make him a complete pussy in the first round and an invincible agent of unstoppable death in the second and third rounds

just to mess with us? Why did you do that? Did you only make *SFIV* for experts? What's the point of the 'Easiest' difficulty setting if it's not easy at all? Did you want hordes of uninitiated gamers who simply wanted to embrace your series to tear *SFIV* from their PS3 in a fit of rage and snap it into hateful shards? Seth can eat our arse.



BEST PSN TITLE

BATTLEFIELD 1943 (PSN)

If you're easily addicted to things, then this game may just rule your life. *Battlefield 1943* smashed sales records, becoming the fastest selling download-only title, ever, and in the first day, players had accumulated just over 29 years worth of playtime, and over five million kills.

The success comes from its simplicity. Three classes, magic pockets full of ammo, vehicles to jump in to and drive around in. Bright,

colourful, and accessible this is a game for the masses, plus the online code is a dream come true as you're rarely lacking a game. It's under \$20 so it's amazing value. All this combines to make you play it more, and more, until the sun outside has dipped below the horizon and risen again nine hours later. Whether you're heads down in *Modern Warfare 2* or have never fired a round in a shooter, this is going to make your day.

RUNNERS-UP

BRAID (PSN)

The darling of the indie world makes it to PSN and we're rapt. It's a lesson in just what can be done when you put your imagination to work.

GRAVITY CRASH (PSN)

Blindsiding us, but pleasantly so. An excellent example of old school gameplay given a modern twist, it's also a steep challenge. Plus, map editor.



BEST GRAPHICS

UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

It's a no brainer, really. The level of detail here for a game of its type and size is second to none. The character models, in particular, are just superb. Gabe Newell? When you're finished

complaining about how Valve can't make games for the PS3 because it's a "disaster", play *Uncharted 2*, stare at the visuals for a while, and cram it in your cramhole.

RUNNERS-UP

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

Incredible character modelling and impeccable collision detection – just check out the action replays for proof.

KILLZONE 2

And nobody thought Guerrilla could get anywhere near the detail in the now-infamous original E3 teaser back in 2005.



BEST GAMING IN-JOKE

ASSASSIN'S CREED II

Without spoiling too much, during *Assassin's Creed II* you'll meet an old relative – an uncle you don't recognise. "Don't you recognise me?" he says. "It's a-me, Mario!" Cue chuckles. Ezio's

uncle Mario isn't a plumber, but he can handle some pretty dangerous shit. Even funnier? A Nintendo-related gag in a game the Wii couldn't handle in a pink fit.



BEST PUBLISHER

EA

2009 saw a lot of quality titles from plenty of publishers. We can't think of any publisher that didn't have at least a couple of true triple-A smashes, but it's EA that sticks out for the most. We believe EA is this year's most consistent

publisher, with the likes of *Skate 2*, *Fight Night Round 4*, *Need of Speed SHIFT*, *Brutal Legend*, *Dragon Age: Origins*, *The Saboteur*, *The Beatles: Rock Band*, *FIFA 10* and *Battlefield 1943* all highly impressing us.



BEST PSP TITLE

MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE (PSP)

In Japan this sells PSPs, yet in the West it's considered a niche title. Which is a shame as this is a complete package that defies the usual tenets of portable gaming – easily digestible moments of game playing, simple to pick up and play – but sits remarkably well on the small screen.

It's primarily an RPG as you battle scores of creatures purely for the joy of battling scores of creatures, but getting to some of the bigger nasties

is going to take a long time as any *Monster Hunter* wonk will tell you, their eyes wide with tales of pouring tens, if not hundreds, of hours in to a quest to make a rare weapon. You'll benefit from making a party of four, not only for the loot but the feeling of camaraderie as you and three others tool up and get out there. Your battle isn't just a matter of stats versus stats, but how skilled you are at attacking, dodging and healing. An epic production.

RUNNERS-UP

GRAND THEFT AUTO: CHINATOWN WARS (PSP)

A glossy port of the DS original with more bits added, this is filled with the same acerbic *GTA* wit and action that makes the series so adored. Buy it.

GRAN TURISMO (PSP)

An amazing achievement and indication of what can be squeezed into a gig and a bit's worth of data. It feels just right and it's glorious to look at. This is likely as broad a portable racer you'll see for a while.

GAME OF THE YEAR



UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

“We’ve spoken about this game enough – we’ll turn it over to you guys to explain.”

We’ve spoken about this game enough – we’ll turn it over to you guys to explain why *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* was the best game of 2009.

My selection for Game of the Year is: *Uncharted 2*, because of its ability to make you feel like your a part of a fully interactive Hollywood movie.

Ian Spiteri, via email

I had the most fun playing this than any other game this year.

Gustav Johansen, via email

I found myself starting a new game the moment I finished it.

Rafal Mlodzik, via email

Brilliant story, humour... it's what all games should be like. One for the ages.

Davud Altuntas, via Facebook

Uncharted 2 is the greatest game ever. This is the first time I have sat down to play a game and just gone, "Wow!"

Benjamin Robert Napier, via Facebook

What more can you ask of a game, except from asking it to never end?

Logan Moloney, via Facebook

And the winner...

Find me a better example of a game that makes anyone who has ever said a bad word by the PS3 and I'll eat my hat.

Trent McInnes, via email

RUNNERS-UP

Here's a breakdown of how the votes tallied up.

**UNCHARTED 2:
AMONG THIEVES 46%**

MODERN WARFARE 2 35%

**BATMAN: ARKHAM
ASYLUM 5%**

ASSASSIN'S CREED II 4%

FIFA 10 2%

BORDERLANDS 1%

BRÜTAL LEGEND >1%
GHOSTBUSTERS >1%
STREET FIGHTER IV >1%
INFAMOUS >1%
KILLZONE 2 >1%
FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4 >1%
DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS >1%
RED FACTION GUERRILLA >1%
SKATE 2 >1%
FLOWER (PSN) >1%
**MONSTER HUNTER
FREEDOM UNITE (PSP) >1%**
THE SABOTEUR >1%
BATTLEFIELD 1943 (PSN) >1%
**LEISURE SUIT LARRY:
BOX OFFICE BUST >1%**

PLAYTV

And you thought your PS3 could just play games, movies and music. Think again!

So, you have a TV or monitor, and you have a PS3. You have two thirds of the equipment needed to use Play TV. The external, small black box plugs in to your aerial – the same that goes in to the back of a television – your TV or monitor, and to your PS3, so you now watch and record high definition digital television using your PlayStation. And it's supremely easy to set it up.



YOU WILL NEED

- A PS3
- Play TV
- A terrestrial aerial
- 20 minutes to set it up

YOU MAY NEED

- A bigger hard drive if you intend on keeping a lot of shows stored and also play a lot of games.
- An aerial splitter (under \$10) and some more RF aerial cable (available at many electronics stores and some supermarkets) if you want to keep your HDTV connected to the aerial.

YOU MAY LIKE TO HAVE

- A PSP
- Your PS3 connected to the internet to view your shows remotely on your PSP

1. SET UP

Once everything's out of the box, put the included disc in your PS3 and follow the instructions (which are basically plugging in the aerial from your wall and the USB cable between Play TV and your PS3). You'll then have to select your country and state, and then wait while Play TV scans for digital channels in your area. Play TV will also ask you if you want to record television whilst you're playing games or watching Blu-rays/DVDs. If you do, the recording may 'stutter' depending on how much your game uses your PS3's hard drive. Try it out. We haven't had any problems so far.

2. PRIORITISE

Once you have your channels tuned in you'll see some duplicates, for instance two lots of ABC1. They may have different signal strengths, so if you have a digital TV already, remember the number of the one that works best and add it, and other channels that you'll frequently use, to your Favourites. This is a shortcut way to flip through the free-to-air stations. Unless you like playing channel roulette, this is a smart way to organise everything.





3: RECORD

With your channels in order, you can now browse the electronic program guide, also known as the EPG. This EPG is updated via your aerial, automatically, and will tell you the shows that are on throughout the next seven days. Flip through the EPG and select a show to watch now or record later – you're also able to watch a show whilst recording another. You can also search for a program and set it to record daily or weekly, depending on when it is on. The coolest thing is, your PS3 doesn't even need to be turned on for it to record. Say you wanted to record *Seinfeld* on GO at midday: choose to record it, flick your PS3 to standby and it will automatically turn back on, record the show, and then turn itself back off.

4: LIVE TV BUFFERS

Live TV can be put on pause and then resumed later. So, if you need to leave the TV and to get a snack or go to the toilet, hit pause, and the show will remain exactly where you left it. Come back, resume, and you can fast forward through the ads to catch up to the live broadcast.

5: PLAYBACK

Play TV stores recorded programs within itself, not on the XMB. Find 'Library' in Play TV and your shows will be in there. Highlight the show you want to watch and it will give you a brief playback of part of the program on the thumbnail for you to check that's what you want to watch. After that, you can operate the program much like you do a Blu-ray/DVD, as you can pause, rewind and fast-forward.

6: PSP AND PLAY TV

This is possibly one of the coolest and most versatile aspects of Play TV. If your PSP is registered to your PS3 via remote play, you can use your PSP to watch live TV and record shows, either by directly communicating with the PS3, or via the internet. You can find full instructions of how to activate remote play by connecting your PSP to your PS3 via USB, then in the PS3 XMB going to 'Settings' and then 'Remote Play'. Now you can record shows whilst you're out of the house, or away from your PS3.

7: STORAGE

A show recorded for 32 minutes in SD takes roughly 1GB. A show recorded in HD over the same time uses 2.2Gb. So if you have a smallish harddrive it's going to get filled pretty quickly as there's only one drawback to Play TV, and that is that you cannot backup your shows to an external device. Once a show is on your PS3, that's where it'll stay. So, unless you have a mammoth hard drive, or really, really, want to keep something to watch later, delete it once you're done with it.



PlayStation
Network

FREE to join
to play

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The PSP®go puts the PlayStation world in your pocket. Not only is it small and light, it comes with 16GB of memory that allows you to download and play top games like Gran Turismo® from just about anywhere*. Add to this the fact that you can watch videos, listen to music, surf the internet and chat on Skype and you'll wonder how we managed to fit it into anything, let alone your pocket

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PSP
PlayStation Portable



REVIEW RATING

PlayStation
GOLD AWARD

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an amazing fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible praise.

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the very best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.

PlayStation
BRONZE AWARD

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a bunch of moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but few will want to play a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Virtually nothing good here at all, and definitely not worth the effort of removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality.

“We imagine this is the kind of game that might give **Quentin Tarantino a semi**”

THE SABOTEUR

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We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs!



“The Saboteur is all things naughty and few things nice, and we like that”

PlayStation
Official Magazine - Australia
**BRONZE
AWARD**

WORSE THAN **BETTER THAN**
INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS | MERCENARIES 2

THE SABOTEUR

An Irishman walks into a bar...

We imagine this is the kind of game that might give Quentin Tarantino a semi. Tits, cussin' and killin' Nazis. There's a harem of mostly undressed French strippers always waiting just outside your hideout, the city is full of Nazis to slaughter, and leading man Sean Devlin loves to swear.

He also loves to smoke.

The Saboteur is all things naughty and few things nice, and we like that. It's unpretentious. The first thing you'll see, the moment you boot the game up, is a topless cabaret dancer – because Pandemic knows sex sells. Devlin will light a cigarette after walking away from a massive explosion, because years of Hollywood

conditioning tells us *that's what cool action heroes do*. *The Saboteur* doesn't hide anything. Everything is clearly defined. Anything red and with a swastika on it is evil and must be destroyed – and every now and then Pandemic will toss some nude breasts in your face to remind you what you're fighting for. It works.

And, importantly, it's far better than their other open-world game, *Mercenaries 2*.

The premise is ridiculous: Sean Devlin, mechanic-turned-race-car driver and the least Irish-sounding Irishman ever, is trapped in France after the Germans invade at the onset of World War II. When his closest mate, Jules, is killed by the hilariously evil German Dierker (a man with the squarest jaw and blondest hair in all of Europe) he bursts into action – wreaking a bloody trail of righteous retribution from one side of Paris to the other. We should mention this all happened because Sean and Jules felt it'd be a *huge laugh* to bust into a German facility and drive Dierker's car off a cliff.

The Saboteur is *GTA* crossed with *Assassin's Creed* crossed with *Prototype*, crossed with every unhinged WWII fantasy you

can concoct. At its core, it's a third-person open-world adventure, with a climbing system not that dissimilar to *Assassin's Creed*. You'll drive, run and clamber around the City of Love blowing up Nazi structures and blowing Nazis. It's not perfect, but it's far better than we expected.

It's all executed in a totally wild fashion too. German zeppelins bristling with machine guns circle the city, which is peppered with a zany amount of guard towers and makeshift prison facilities. We certainly won't pretend to know what occupied Paris looked like, but it wasn't like this. But it works. It's like an old *Commando* comic on steroids.

The truly eye-catching feature of *The Saboteur* is the use of its colour palette. Pandemic's swansong may be a mostly standard action adventure on the inside, but it's a bold visual experiment on the outside. We've already written about this during previews, but now we've had a few days with the game we've seen how the dynamic colour system works, and we really like it. Areas of Paris firmly under German control are terminally overcast, and the only hint of colour that isn't various shades of black and



K INFO

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: PANDEMIC
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$99.95



Like a lead zeppelin

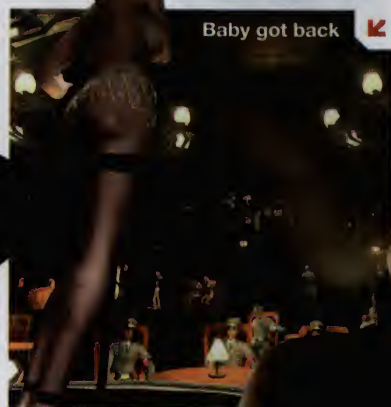


"So, how many miles to the gallon?"

grey comes from the blood red flashes of Nazi swastikas (and... blood). The rolling country hills of free(ish) France, and the liberated areas of the city itself, are awash with colour. It changes on the fly as you zoom between them. Careening through an area of Paris loosened from the Nazi's vicelike grasp and into an occupied zone will instantly dunk the world in dank grey. It's unique, and very cool – really.

The missions will rarely fling you from the side of your seat, as most are fairly basic in nature. One aboard a German zeppelin offers a glimpse of what Pandemic probably had envisioned all for the way through – but at some point during development *The Saboteur* simply got bulked out with the standard array of fetch-this and kill-them quests. That said, the sheer number of destruction targets available off-mission makes it easy to temporarily forget about the story. After we played through enough to unlock our friendly arms-dealer, who kindly provided us with a regular supply of dynamite, we began to lose more hours than we would come to realise hooning around town taking down targets of opportunity. It's a satisfying grind, because there are perks to be had by taking down Nazi structures and killing soldiers. For instance, make liberal use of the game's stealth kill mechanic and you'll soon unlock the sucker punch. This gives the ability to take down an unsuspecting enemy, while face-to-face, with one blow. Now you'll no longer have to get behind Krauts to snap their necks.

The controls feel robust enough and, aside from the severely shonky voice acting and the



Baby got back

fact the engine notes from the game's suite of autos have this odd, pre-canned quality that doesn't sound quite right, we don't have any major issues with the audio. The visuals are more than adequate, and the art direction goes a long way addressing any shortfalls there.

The problem with *The Saboteur* is originality. As a package, *The Saboteur* is highly original – WWII was basically a backdrop for little more than corridor shooters, flight sims and RTS games before Pandemic put an open-world spin on things. The distinctive use of colour is unlike anything we've played before either. Break it into its

Smoking: it's only cool in WWII, and cop movies



T&A

Skylar St. Claire, pictured in concept art above, is a spirited girl who's more than happy to allow ex-mechanics a little time to check her lubrication. Like we said, *The Saboteur* doesn't hold back on the poon (although the nudity is cleverly only activated by a one-time code for new purchasers). Skylar was featured nude in *Playboy's* Women of Video Games pictorial on the company's Cyber Club site.

parts, however, and you'll find a felony system lifted from *GTAIV*, and disguise system that owes more than a little to *Prototype* and a free-climbing mechanic just like *Assassin's Creed*. It doesn't really do any of those things better than the games it imitates, but it definitely doesn't do them poorly. It just doesn't have much of an identity beyond them. It also begins to get less entertaining the more you persist, depending on how easily distracted you get once you feel you've seen everything there is to offer.

With Pandemic (as it once was) shuttered the moment *The Saboteur* wrapped and the game plunked out on shelves with zero fanfare things look grim for this Parisian blast-fest. We think word-of-mouth is the only hope this title has to make any kind of mark. It's a shame, because *The Saboteur* is easily the best game from Pandemic in at least five years.

👤 Luke Reilly

FINAL SAY:



- The great visual effects really give this game a unique hook
- Swags of stuff to destroy should you become addicted



- A wide mix of pinched ideas
- Mission variety dries up

VERDICT: A surprisingly fun title with a unique look. Flawed but charming. Well worth an attempt.

8



Stuck in a rut? **K**



but it's a big step up from last year.

The hook this time is you can control your rider's body with the right stick. Leaning into corners, pre-loading, moving in the air and recovering from bails is all done independently of the bike controls. It takes some work to learn how to use these in tandem. The other new gimmick is terrain deformation, like the original *MotorStorm*. Driving over soft dirt, mud and snow will carve deep grooves in the ground. It looks pretty neat (particularly when you do it near the shore of a lake, for instance, and it forms little channels of water) but it doesn't really seem to affect much. A track will become more worn as you and your opponents pass over it, but feedback from the DualShock 3 doesn't translate these ruts very well.

The physics, mix of vehicles and content won't surprise return fans – but it's a decent package. We hate the fade to white out-of-bounds trick in freestyle mode though; bring back the invisible human cannon! **— Luke Reilly**

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: RACING | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: RAINBOW STUDIOS

MX VS ATV REFLEX

Socking it to *MotorStorm*?



We always find it odd whenever the *MX vs ATV* series is treated with automatic disdain. We don't know where that comes from. It's true the most recent instalments of the series have struggled to impress critics, but there's no hiding the pedigree of the series. Rainbow Studios, the dev team responsible for the *ATV Offroad Fury* and *Motocross Madness*, kick started the *MX vs ATV* series with *Unleashed* back in 2005. *Unleashed* was a barnstormer of a game.

Reflex doesn't rub us the same way that did,

FINAL SAY:

- Much better than *Untamed*
- Decent, satisfying physics
- Still missing that original spark
- Some ropery clipping during bails

VERDICT: Motocross freaks shouldn't regret parting with cash for this, but it just needs a little more zest and content.

7

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: MUSIC | RELEASE: TBC | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: HARMONIX | PLAYERS: 1-8 | PRICE: TBC

PlayStation
**GOLD
AWARD**

ROCK BAND 2

Finally?

At the time of going to print stock of *Rock Band 2* has, without any warning whatever, made it into New Zealand.

There are Australian online stores selling it, so we're just going to review this and get it over with.

It's ridiculous that this game has been out in Europe for close to a year, and well over a year in the US. It's ridiculous because *Rock Band 2* is the best music game on the market – and we haven't been able to purchase it down under.

Rock Band 2 is, for us, a unique reviewing opportunity. There's never been a game we've

been able to play for an entire year before reviewing. And we have played *Rock Band 2* constantly, for an entire year.

It's certainly not much of a leap from the original – just a few tweaks and a little polish here and there. The World Tour is more accessible – the individual world tour and band world tour are the same, meaning you can play with any number of players and still progress. You don't need to have separate career for when your other band member(s) aren't home. The tracklist is larger and contains the type of stuff you'd

expect from a genre-defining music game. Far more authoritative than *Guitar Hero 5*.

You can export all but five or so of your tracks from *Rock Band* to play in *Rock Band 2*, and all past DLC works with it too.

Long story short, if you're a music game fan and you don't have *Rock Band 2*, you're not a music game fan. If a game that we play as much now as we did when it came out over 12 months ago isn't deserving of our highest praise, then what is? **— Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

- Fantastic tracklist
- Best DLC in the business
- Why was this released overseas over a year ago?!

VERDICT: Despite MTV's treatment of fans down under, *Rock Band 2* is the best music game currently available.

10



STRAIGHT OUTTA PYONGYANG

Finishing this game was a chore, although we did get one reward in the form of a surprising original song that plays over the end credits. The simple tune, featuring a large number of Mickey Rourke's expletive-filled sound-bytes edited into the verses and choruses, is actually pretty good (as spoken-word swear-fests go). We really can't print any of it here though – check it out on the web.

Poor bloke, he just doesn't know Dick

"Who's dicking around now, huh?"

ROGUE WARRIOR

The hardest Dick you'll ever play with

This review has placed us in a bad position. Bethesda wouldn't send us this game (it wouldn't send anyone the game, actually) so we had to go and buy a copy. *Rogue Warrior* is just awful, but that's not the problem. The problem is the last thing we want to do is offend ex-Navy SEAL and all-American killbot Richard Marcinko – the Shark Man of the Delta. Whatever that means. We're slightly fearful about any man who has sneaked aboard Air Force One and off again without being noticed. Now it just looks like we've bunged this in simply to give it – and by extension, him – a sound thrashing.

This isn't the case. In fact, the involvement of Dick Marcinko is almost exclusively the only good thing this game has going for it. The bearded, pony-tailed, self-styled wrathful god of combat, voiced in a slightly workmanlike (but humorous) fashion by Mickey Rourke, adds personality to a game that's basically a total tragedy in all areas.

Rogue Warrior sees Demo Dick dropped into Cold War North Korea to destroy some stuff. Halfway through the game he crosses the border and sets about destroying some stuff in Russia too. That's the story. All of it.

Virtually everything about this game is hideously half-arsed. The bone-lazy level design includes no fun or interesting objectives whatsoever. Your enemies are a bunch of window lickers so painfully brain-dead that the developers made sure to keep as many of them as possible facing away from you when you happen on scene (so you can gut them before they do something stupid). The massively outdated visuals are well below average for this generation, the animations are rubbish and it's unforgivably glitch-ridden. The hit detection isn't much chop either. It's just so random. An enemy is just as likely to shrug off a headshot from behind as he is to die from it, and there's no consistency regarding how many bullets these Commies can absorb before checking out. A desperate double tap may dispatch one guy, but half a magazine of delicately placed chest shots in another may do nothing. The solution is to sprint around and use the Quick Kill mechanic, but this gets old faster than seafood salad in direct sunlight. Plus, it doesn't always register.

The most offensive part of this whole catastrophe is the length. It's a debacle. It's a spectacular debacle. It's debacular. We've spoken about this in the past, and we're prepared to accept lean games assuming the replay value is high on account of its tight and well-polished nature, or it has a bevy of additional content to maintain your interest long after the campaign is over. Imagine our surprise when we discovered we'd literally finished the game in about three hours. And

it's not even a budget-priced game. A paltry eight levels, all of them basically the same (grey, brown, full of Communists)? Rebellion and Bethesda are seriously just taking the piss here. There is a multiplayer mode, but absolutely nobody is playing it (partly because nobody likes this game, and partly because it's probably quite difficult to see past a *Modern Warfare 2* hard-on).

This sounded like a fantastic idea. An orgy of 1980s action set to a soundtrack of cuss-filled one-liners. We finished it, but only out of bemusement. Who decided this was fit for retail? In the words of Marcinko himself, it's a total goatf--k. **✚ Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

• Funny, at times. You'll learn insults from it. Pretty good ones

• Awful visuals
• Awful gameplay
• Awfully bloody short

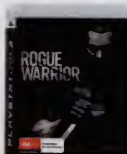
VERDICT:

Rogue Warrior is a complete fiasco. We tried to like it, but it just wasn't worth releasing.

3

INFO

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: NBP
DEVELOPER: REBELLION
PLAYERS: 1-12
PRICE: \$99.95



FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** MUSIC | **RELEASE:** NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION | **DEVELOPER:** NEVERSOFT
PLAYERS: 1-8 | **PRICE:** \$89.95-\$329.95

BAND HERO

Need another hero?

Band Hero: it's 'Guitar Hero: Top 40' with a few tracks baby boomers will dig. It doesn't innovate beyond the recently released *Guitar Hero 5*, but remains as functional and assessable as its stablemate. It's good, really. The arenas look good, the animations seem to be improving, the charting is passable. Nothing really to poke fun at...

...except at the insulting level of censorship in some of the songs. We get *Band Hero* is a 'family-friendly' title. Hint for next time – if a song is full of words the marketing department wants removed, maybe it's just not appropriate in the first place.

We hate to harp on, but it gets insane. The word 'whiskey' is removed from every chorus

in 'American Pie' (the word 'rye' stays, even though it's also alcohol). We just can't get behind this kind of political correctness. The word 'bedpost' is removed from Fall Out Boy's 'Sugar, We're Going Down' – presumably because it's preceded by "I'm just a notch on your...". 'Honky Tonk Women' and Joss Stone's 'You Had Me' (which are about hookers and drugs respectively) are hacked to pieces. Is this what radio sounds like in the US? No wonder they lost their shit when Janet Jackson popped out a nipple on TV.

We know *Band Hero* was never really meant for us; it's meant for simpler folk with less discerning taste in music. The kind who'll swallow pretty much anything the record companies sew some sequins to and chuck out on stage. There's nothing wrong with that. *FIFA* isn't made for people who don't like football. Thing is, we figured all those people were already playing *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* anyway. You know, the ones with all the good music? **Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

- Still feels fine
- Some great tracks buried in it
- You can't say 'whiskey' in a 40-year-old song anymore? Really?

VERDICT: just as robust as we've come to expect, although the over-zealous censorship grates a lot.

7

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** PARTY | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** WARNER BROS. | **DEVELOPER:** ARTIFICIAL MIND & MOVEMENT | **PLAYERS:** 1-4 | **PRICE:** \$69.95

SCENE IT? BRIGHT LIGHTS! BIG SCREEN!

This is (movie) madness!

Turning board games into videogame is an awful idea. It's been done with *Monopoly*, and it was even worse than regular *Monopoly*. Still, we figured it might work out here. We've played the *Scene It?* board games and they're great. The question types are creative and there are stacks of actual movie clips. They're far better than last generation's disappointing *BUZZ!*: *The Hollywood Quiz* ever was.

But no dice. According to the developers there are over 2,800 questions across 23 different round types in *Scene It?* A good deal of it can be quite tough too, which film buffs will appreciate. The problem is, while this is the first *Scene It?* title for PS3, somehow it's the worst

one yet. It's surprisingly unlike the previous ones, currently only available on Xbox 360.

The presentation is woefully vanilla, it's tough to instantly tell who just buzzed in, and the host is just horrible. There's no online mode either.

Nothing about *Scene It?* seems like its been optimised to exploit the PS3. Despite the fact the game ships on a Blu-ray, all the clips appear to be in bog-standard definition, and repeated questions start coming around before you'd expect. It's movie trivia. We could crap out a few hundred text-based questions in one afternoon. That'd pad a game like this right out.

Buy the board games. They're cheaper, and they're more fun. **Luke Reilly**



FINAL SAY:

- Creative round types
- Good mix of genres/eras
- Dreadful presentation
- Fails to exploit the PS3

VERDICT: Could've been a real hit for the *BUZZ!* crowd. Instead, it comes off looking like a poor cousin.

5



FORMAT: PSP | GENRE: ADVENTURE | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL | PLAYERS: 1 | PRICE: \$69.95

ASSASSIN'S CREED: BLOODLINES

The red stuff

He can see your house from here. Be worried



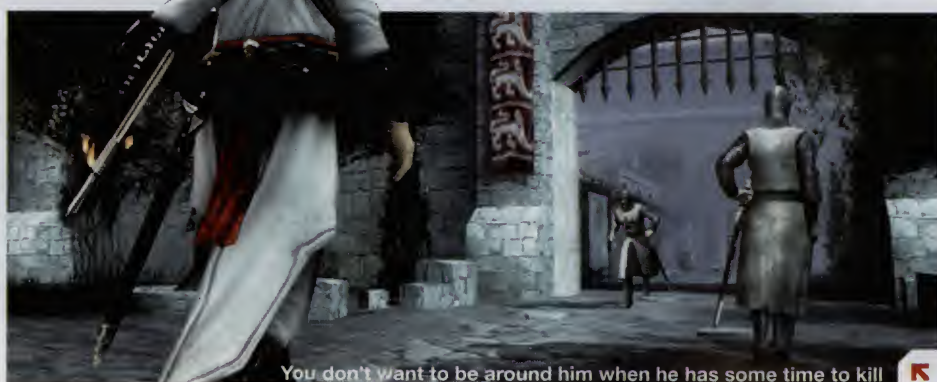
Doing its best to expand on the AC universe, *Bloodlines* bridges some of the gap between the original and the latest sequel. From the get-go it's clear this is really one for fans, as the way the storyline picks up you'll be left wondering who Altair is, what the Animus does and why it's talking to you. But fans will be the only ones keen enough to push through this ho-hum experience.

It's not that this is a bad game. It runs smoothly, although it's covered in brown and textures sometimes suddenly snap in and out of focus. Standing on vantage points highlights that the area you're in is made up of conspicuously square, triangular and round buildings, and

the neighbourhoods you're in are fairly small. It means the game loads quickly (especially if you have it installed), which is a blessing.

The series' two drawbacks, climbing over stuff and killing people, are muted here. Because of limitations on textures, hand-holds are pretty obvious to spot which takes the mystery and thrill out of climbing up and up tall buildings and structures. Guards are brutal morons, eager for a fight but often slow to react when their partner is stealthily murdered right in front of them.

Smartly, plugging this in to your PS3 with *Assassin's Creed II* unlocks some new weapons, but apart from that there's little incentive to put this in your PSP. **Paul Taylor**



You don't want to be around him when he has some time to kill

FINAL SAY:



- Smooth frame rate
- Cinematic cut scenes



- Less than intelligent guards
- The thrill of climbing is missing

VERDICT:

A shade too workmanlike in most areas. Devotees will enjoy the extra story, but you could skip it.

6

FORMAT: PSP | GENRE: SPORTS | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA | DEVELOPER: SPORTS INTERACTIVE | PLAYERS: 1 | PRICE: \$49.95

FOOTBALL MANAGER HANDHELD 2010

Welcome aboard, Mr. Manager!

There's a very specific type of fan drawn to games like this, games that consist entirely of menus and shuffling through text. We suspect he has already bought his copy, but we'll review it nonetheless.

The formula of this game, as far as we can tell, has never changed. As the manager of a football club you deal with the day to day affairs of the sporting world – signing, scouting, player bids

and all kinds of other minutia. You do this until matchday, when you pick a team, toss them on the field and hope they win. Or, to be more exact, you pick a bunch of names from a screen, toss them to the mercy of odds and hope they take a big binary dump on the other guys.

Unsurprisingly for a game that looks like an Excel spreadsheet, it's not going to blast your eyeballs out through the back of your bonce. This is stat crunching, although it's not pretending to be anything but.

The main criticism we'd level at *Football Manager Handheld 2010* is that is simply isn't noticeably different from last year's version. The new assistant manager hints help, particularly with accessibility (and there appear to have been some tweaks elsewhere) but overall nothing has drastically changed. **Clint McCredie**



FINAL SAY:



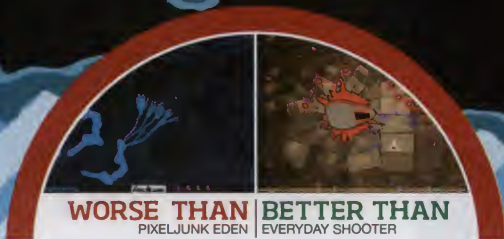
- A ton of depth
- A-League features



- Nothing to look at
- Few differences from last year

VERDICT: Niche. Still, it's this or nothing. It's not as if Sega has a lot of competition within this genre.

6



"Ice to meet you"

PIXELJUNK SHOOTER

Elemental destruction

Titles released under the PixelJunk banner are generally polished, genre-benders with solid production values. *Shooter* is no different.

Taking control of a craft you go deep underground, shooting enemies and bits of the environment to retrieve trapped scientists and workers with your extendable claw, which also grabs nearby elemental devices like a capsule of lava or water.

The environment works in a fairly straightforward rock-paper-scissors equation, where water beats lava turning it into shootable rock, lava beats smoke by burning it, and

smoke and water will do nothing. These different elements affect the temperature of your craft in positive and negative ways: get too close to lava or stay in smoke too long and you'll explode, so you need to cool your ship off in water. Plus, your limitless supply of homing missiles will crank up the heat, so the wet stuff is the best way to shed degrees.

Most of your time you're just shooting enemies or bits of the environment though you have to use everything on screen to your advantage. The way water and lava flow does affect where you'll shoot – one wrong blast may either trap you or the guy you're trying to rescue, so you have to pick your way carefully through the landscape. Failure isn't determined by how many times you die, but by how many luckless scientists you let perish. Once five are dead per level it's back to the start of that stage.

Graphics are pretty simple too with very little flourish. The environment is a touch confusing at first – what you can and can't destroy is left to experimentation – but it doesn't matter if you do collide with something solid as your ship will just bounce off. As you progress the palette of the landscape changes so you have to readjust at the beginning of each new area.

Like we said last month with *Gravity Crash*, it's the simplest ideas that often the best. *Shooter* is a combo of twitch gameplay, problem solving and memorising the patterns of what happens in a stage. When you're zooming around, acting partially on reflex and assessing just what's going to fall where or how a mobile lava spitting creature will help rather than kill you, it's highly enjoyable. You will feel cheated, though, when you're caught unawares by an

➤ Spaceships get boogers, too, apparently



DON'T SHOOT UP

Your standard weapon is a simple bullet, but charge it up and it becomes a homing missile – very cool. As the terrain changes, you'll also get a powerful lava-spewing attachment, effective for melting ice. Don't do as we did and fire straight above your ship, as the stream will cascade back down on top of you, sending you back to the last checkpoint. You will feel foolish.

enemy that spawns right behind you, or blasting through rock too vigorously and clipping a lab coat that's hidden off screen. These moments are rare but they take the sheen off slightly.

The dynamic in co-op mode is altered a bit. It means that two people who know a stage well can carve through rock and rescue at the same time, but as you share one screen you need to make sure that you don't race ahead as your partner may become stuck, and forcing you to backtrack. One of the best value games available on PSN. **A Paul Taylor**

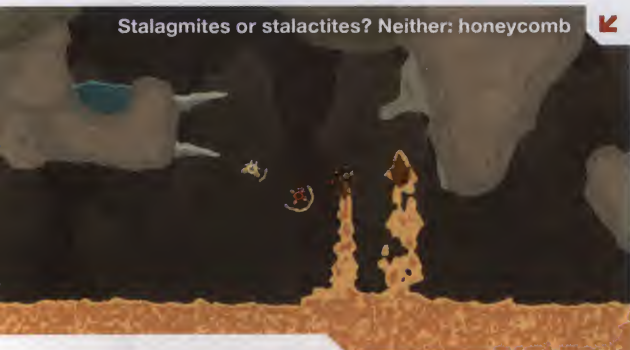
FINAL SAY:

- Tactical environmental destruction
- Steady difficulty and complexity curve
- Polished presentation
- Forcing the player to rely on memory is a cheap move

VERDICT: Yes, another twin-stick shooter, but extremely well made and different enough to earn a place on your harddrive.

9

➤ Stalagmites or stalactites? Neither: honeycomb



INFO

FORMAT: PSN
GENRE: ARCADE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: PIXELJUNK
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$12.95

FORMAT: PSN | GENRE: SHOOTER | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION | DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD | PLAYERS: 1-8 | PRICE: \$22.95

CALL OF DUTY CLASSIC

Above and beyond

PlayStation
BRONZE
AWARD

This is value for money. It's long in the tooth now, but back in 2003 *Call of Duty* was scooping up Game of the Year awards left, right and centre. If you never played it on PC, it's worthwhile grabbing to see where the whole phenomenon started. If you did, you'll likely want to see it again in HD.

You get the whole game; all three campaigns. You'll drop into Normandy as a US paratrooper and press back the Germans from war-torn French hamlets. You'll crash to Earth in a glider as a British Red Beret and hold a vital bridge from a violent German counterattack, before joining the SAS and sneaking aboard a German battleship. You'll storm Stalingrad as a Russian with no rifle and five bullets in his hand, just like *Enemy at the Gates*. It's all here.

Perhaps the best thing about *Call of Duty Classic*, however, is how it reminds us how much more difficult games used to be. We barely remember the days of first-person shooters before regenerating health. It's an entirely different world. You can't charge into skirmishes like a bull at a gate when doing so may only leave you with a sliver of health to get through the inevitable next encounter.

We have criticisms. The friendly and enemy AI is poor, the controls haven't been quite tailored properly to console (it needed

7 You gonna wave the Germans to death?

a grenade shortcut, rather than cycling), the checkpoints are often placed way too far apart and limiting multiplayer to eight players make that side of game hardly seem worth it. However, these don't take into account the fact *Call of Duty* is a seven-year-old game. It's going to have cracks in the surface.

Otherwise, we reckon it holds its own. It doesn't even look that bad after a quick 720p makeover. Why would anybody buy *Rogue Warrior* when you can get something like this for a quarter of the cost? **7** Luke Reilly

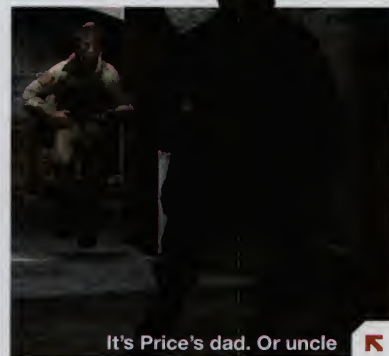
FINAL SAY:



- Satisfyingly tough
- Entertaining missions



- It's showing its age
- Multiplayer seems hardly worth it



It's Price's dad. Or uncle **8**

VERDICT: It's old (and bloody hard), but well worth the asking price to see the game that took Infinity Ward to the big time.

8

FORMAT: PSN | GENRE: SPORT | RELEASE: NOW | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: VOOFOO STUDIOS | PLAYERS: 1-2 | PRICE: TBA

HUSTLE KINGS

Pool shark or beached whale?

Pool and billiards are tricky games to keep releasing in a digital format, as it's usually more fun to play on an actual pool table, and the game itself doesn't really change from year to year.

Technically, this ticks the boxes. It looks glossy, with subtle lighting effects, and runs smoothly (which you'd expect). The ball physics are spot on with good indications of what your shot's going to do without the game holding your hand and spoiling itself. The career mode is pretty robust as you go from match to match, with different game types keeping things fresh. We especially liked the option of just doing trick shots from the option in the main menu.

Thankfully it avoids gimmicks, like tables in the shape of a star or horse's head, to differentiate itself from the next pool game, but if you have a billiards or snooker game already there's not that much new here that you haven't

seen before. It all feels a bit sterile, too, and the weird floating pool cue doesn't do much to alter that. Solid, but hardly exciting. **7** Paul Taylor

FINAL SAY:



- Looks great
- Ball physics are sound



- No ambience
- Pointless avatars

VERDICT: The only thing holding *Hustle Kings* back is a dash of personality. It's totally competent but just a touch too surgical.

7

Above: round things made out of square things **8**



7 "Mate, your table's a bit wonky"

INTERMISSION

Blu-ray & DVD

DIRECTORS: NEILL BLOMKAMP | **CAST:** SHARLTO COPLEY, DAVID JAMES, JASON COPE, VANESSA HAYWOOD | **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD/BLU-RAY

DISTRICT 9 (M)

Some 30 years ago, aliens made first contact with Earth. They were not here to attack us, however – they were refugees. The last survivors of their home world. The alien 'prawns' were set up in a makeshift slum in South Africa's District 9 as the world argued about what to do with them. With patience running thin, control over the aliens is contracted out to a private company (MNU) – but they're only interested in making the aliens' out-of-this-world weaponry work (which, unfortunately for them, requires alien DNA to activate). However, when an MNU field operative contracts a mysterious virus that begins changing his DNA he quickly becomes the most hunted man in the world. With nowhere left to run, he makes directly for District 9.

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Starship Troopers
Smart sci-fi featuring Neil Patrick Harris

VERDICT:

A parable on intolerance weaved into a dose of refreshing and unique sci-fi. A stunning directorial debut from Neill Blomkamp.

9



THE DAMNED UNITED (M)

Director: Tom Hooper
Cast: Michael Sheen, Timothy Spall, Colm Meaney, Peter McDonald
Available on: DVD

Even if you couldn't give a toss about English football, or even sports films, this is excellent no matter what your thoughts are on the beautiful game. Brian Clough was the manager of Leeds for 44 days in 1974, before being sacked for losing five out of their six games in the season. His ascension to manager of Leeds came as a shock to many, as he openly and publicly criticised the squad and their previous manager for dirty tactics. Fact and fiction rapidly part ways as the film takes great liberties with Clough's history. It doesn't matter one jot as this is superbly made. Sheen as 'Cloughie' captures the man's charisma and clanging subtlety while Spall as Peter Taylor, Clough's assistant, is endlessly watchable.

VERDICT:

Funny, entertaining and educational. An ace Brit flick.

8



THE TAKING OF PELHAM 123 (MA15+)

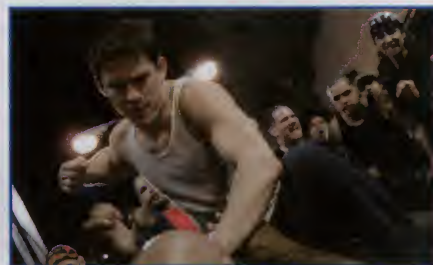
Director: Tony Scott
Cast: Denzel Washington, John Travolta, Luis Guzmán, John Turturro, James Gandolfini
Available on: DVD/Blu-ray

A remake of the 1974 original starring Walter Matthau and Robert Shaw (which was based on a novel, and has already been remade for a telemovie once), *The Taking of Pelham 123* sees a New York City subway dispatcher involved in a deadly game, using his vast knowledge of the NYC subway system to outsmart a gang of criminals who have hijacked Pelham 123 and plan to execute the train's passengers unless a huge ransom is paid within one hour. You've probably never seen the original, but you should. Remember Quentin Tarantino's use of colours as the names of the characters in *Reservoir Dogs*? Mr Blue and the like? Inspired by the hijackers in the original *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three*.

VERDICT:

A passable thriller, but Scott can do better. Remakes do come worse than this though.

6



FIGHTING (M)

Directors: Dito Montiel
Cast: Channing Tatum, Terrence Howard, Zulay Henao, Luis Guzmán, Brian J. White, Flaco Navaja, Cung Le.
Available on: DVD

In director Dito Montiel's (*A Guide to Recognizing Your Saints*) 2009 drama, *Fighting*, an often shirtless Channing Tatum (*G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra*) portrays Shawn, a young man from the South trying to make a living on the streets of New York City. When Shawn gets into an altercation while selling bootleg CDs and DVDs, a con man (Terrence Howard) who witnesses the brawl takes him under his wing and introduces Shawn to NYC's underground street-fighting circuit. In these bare-knuckle battles, Shawn has a chance to win significant money – and also the heart of the beautiful Zulay (Zulay Henao). There's not an over-abundance of substance here, but we weren't really expecting there to be. The good news is the film's fight scenes are brutal and well-staged.

VERDICT:

Predictable but serviceable. It's no *Rocky*, but it works.

6



THE BATTLE OF RED CLIFF (MA15+)

Director: John Woo

Cast: Tony Leung, Takeshi Kaneshiro, Fengyi Zhang, Chen Chang

Available on: DVD/Blu-ray

In 208 AD, in the final days of the Han Dynasty, the shrewd Prime Minister Cao Cao convinced Emperor Han that the only way to unite all of China was to declare war on the kingdoms of Xu and East Wu. Thus began a military campaign of unprecedented scale. Left with no choice the kingdoms of Xu and East Wu formed an alliance. The war culminated in The Battle of Red Cliff – where 2000 ships were burned and the course of Chinese history was changed forever. *The Battle of Red Cliff* is the most expensive Chinese-speaking movie ever, and it shows.

VERDICT:
Epic movie is epic.

8



CHARLIE & BOOTS (M)

Director: Dean Murphy

Cast: Paul Hogan, Shane Jacobson

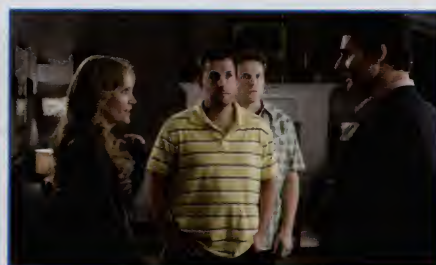
Available on: DVD/Blu-ray

When Charlie McFarlane (Paul Hogan) withdraws from life after a family tragedy, his estranged son, "Boots" (Shane Jacobson) decides to drag him on a trip to fulfil their lifelong dream to go fish off Australia's northern tip in Cape York. Charlie wants no part of it but, propelled by Boots' determination, they travel across the country towards their distant destination, joined by a young and upbeat hitchhiker along the way. *Charlie & Boots* is directed by Dean Murphy (*Strange Bedfellows*), so there's probably a good chance Hollywood will steal the idea and turn it into a comedy starring Adam Sandler and that fat guy from *The King of Queens*.

VERDICT:

A relaxed road movie; light but well-meaning.

7



FUNNY PEOPLE (MA15+)

Directors: Judd Apatow

Cast: Adam Sandler, Seth Rogen, Leslie Mann, Eric Bana, Jonah Hill, Jason Schwartzman

Available on: DVD/Blu-ray

George Simmons (Sandler) is a successful comedian and actor, but when he is diagnosed with leukemia and given less than a year to live he becomes depressed. Seeing tapes of his old standup days he decides to return to comedy, meeting Ira Wright (Rogen) after an impromptu gig. George hires Ira as an assistant and tells him about his terminal condition. While in the process of telling everyone else, he's visited by his ex-fiancé, Laura – who is now married to another man. Judd Apatow films (*The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, *Knocked Up*) always balance crude humour with genuine sentimentality, and this is no different.

VERDICT:

More dramatic than his first two films; Apatow's most mature film to date.

8

DIRECTORS: PETE DOCTER, BOB PETERSON

CAST: ED ASNER, JORDAN NAGAI, CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER, BOB PETERSON, DELROY LINDO

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

UP (PG)

Up is a comedy adventure about a 78-year-old balloon salesman, Carl Fredricksen, who finally fulfils his lifelong dream of a great adventure when he ties thousands of balloons to his house and drifts away to South America. However, not long after leaving he discovers a stowaway: an overly enthusiastic eight-year-old Wilderness Explorer called Russell. *Up* is a film that will have people in tears not five minutes in, will split their sides throughout and likely have them choking up again by the end. Pixar's most mature film yet touches on every emotion. It's a beautiful story, beautifully told. *Up* is Pixar at its very best, and its very best Pixar is untouchable.

VERDICT:

A triumph of imagination, *Up* is a truly remarkable movie. It looks absolutely astonishing on Blu-ray too.

10

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
Everything Pixar has made
Because you have to.
Simple

CINEMAS

DIRECTORS: MICHAEL SPIERIG, PETER SPIERIG | **CAST:** ETHAN HAWKE, WILLEM DAFOE, SAM NEILL, CLAUDIA KARVAN, MICHAEL DORMAN, GABRIELLA MONTE | **IN CINEMAS:** NOW



DAYBREAKERS (MA15+)

Set in the reasonably near future, a mysterious virus has turned most of the world's population in to vampires. Humans are hunted and farmed for their blood, while a scientist Edward Dalton (Hawke) tries to make a blood substitute to save the human race. However, an encounter with a bunch of rogue humans (led by Karvan and Dafoe) means there may be another way to salvation, as long as Dalton's brother (Dorman) and boss (Neill) don't make their own decisions first.

If you want to look deeper, it's a story about natural resources drying up, and the lengths we'd go to – even losing our 'soul' – in order to keep the lifestyle we

have. But let's not get too clever: it's a vampire film that's laughably terrible in places, but still retains a sense of fun without coming close to a parody. Weirdly, everyone who becomes a vampire seems to drop their voice by at least two octaves, and everyone in the future drives a slightly modded Chrysler 300C.

The special effects are more than competent and everyone involved mostly puts in a good performance. Very predictable and very, very bloody, it's also a laugh despite the horror overtones.



ALSO IN CINEMAS...

Up In The Air (M)

Director: Jason Reitman
Cast: George Clooney, Anna Kendrick, Vera Farmiga, Jason Bateman

Ryan Bingham (Clooney) fires people for a living. He does so on contract from bosses who are too gutless to do it themselves, and flies around the US spinning the truth to make a horrendous situation more bearable for those who have just lost their jobs.

Bingham's goal is also to rack up as many frequent flyer points as possible, courtesy of his job, though this dream is threatened when spunky newcomer Natalie (Kendrick) tries to usher in a system that threatens to ground him. Then there's the equally self-absorbed but attainable Alex (Farmiga) to complicate things.

This is a bittersweet comedy and understated in places, and everyone involved shines. Sure, there's a love story that punctuates it, but it never gets sappy. Engrossing from start to finish.

Law Abiding Citizen (MA15+)

Director: F. Gary Gray
Cast: Jamie Foxx, Gerard Butler
If you ever wanted to see a mash of *Man on Fire*, *Death Wish* and *Saw*, you're going to love this. Everyone else, stay the hell away. A tale of extreme revenge with an overblown sense of grandiosity, it is in no way a movie to spend your coins on.

THE BUZZ What's really going on behind-the-scenes

Sam Worthington is to movies what Nolan North is to voice acting, and Andy Serkis is to motion capture. He is omnipresent, though not quite omnipotent. That could change.

He was the surprise star in James Cameron's big budget blockbuster *Avatar*, the surprise choice for *Terminator Salvation*, and now, maybe

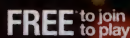
not so surprisingly, is also in the main role for the upcoming *Clash of the Titans* as Perseus, mortal son of the god Zeus – surely being all-knowing is a divine step away?

He was also on the UK cover of esteemed magazine *Empire* twice in a row, once for *Avatar* and once for *Titans*. A rare move, although he was

shrouded in blue CGI for the *Avatar* cover.

Late last year, Worthington was also been crowned GQ's man of the year. This is dud move by the men's lifestyle mag, as, unless Worthington's management is female, it should've gone to his agent. Just how long will it be before he takes over games?





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PlayStation
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**Includes PSP®
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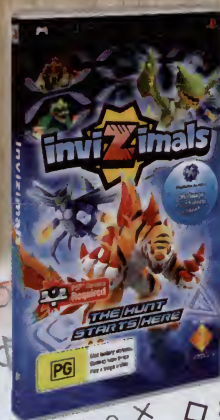
Hunt the invisible monsters that live in your home with Invizimals. This incredible new game uses your PSP® camera to find mysterious creatures that can't be seen with the human eye. Trap as many as you can to create the ultimate collection and then watch as they develop into fearsome monsters. You can even train them to battle others online. The hunt starts here, only on the PSP.®

PG

Mild fantasy violence.
Gaming experience
may change online



PlayStation Portable



SONY
make.believe

INTERNET

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...

LATEST

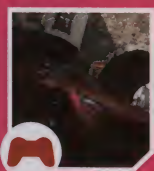
Download this...

Bayonetta



What does a trumpet that fires missiles, butterflies, and an anatomically astounding witch have in common? Find out.

Gran Turismo 5 demo



The driving sim returns, again, but this time it's for a worldwide comp where you could win a season with a real racing team.

NFS SHIFT Team Racing pack



A freebie, this contains five more cars to race and smash in online or offline mode, plus a six-versus-six challenge. It's free.

Fight Night Round 4 Champions pack II



Old school rules affecting when a match ends, plus the mighty Evander Holyfield, Bernard Hopkins and Sonny Liston. A no brainer.

Gravity Crash



Take control of a space ship in this pretty 2D blaster/puzzle game with an in-built level editor. Out-shoots *Pixel Junk*.

NEWS

SCHOOL'S OUT

Capcom dismisses class: permanently

One Capcom title that won't be given the HD gloss or even just re-released is the cult favourite, *Rival Schools*. This 3D fighter is a two-versus-two brawler, with a simplified two kick and two punch layout.

In the first half of last year, Cappers promised that between 20 to 40 of their titles – a combination of PSone games and PSP 'Legacy' games – would make it to the PSN. However, due to copyright restrictions *Rival Schools* just won't make it. Ever.

"There are IP clearances and rights we no longer have (particularly pertaining to voicework/soundtrack I believe)," wrote Chris Svensson, "so our IP management group has told us it can't be re-released," Svensson said. "So if you still have that PSone *Rival Schools* disc in your collection, it's unfortunately going to be the only way that gets played for the foreseeable future."



LITTLEBIGPLANET CARIBBEAN DLC

Bottle o' rum not included



By the time you read this, more *LittleBigPlanet* content will have landed on the PSN. And it's theme is *Pirates of the Caribbean*. For just under \$10, you get to control Capt. 'Sack' Sparrow through five new Pirates of the Caribbean levels, backed by new music, stickers, one costume and, yes, more Trophies. Plus you get the chance to make

Sackboy walk the plank and end up in the wet blue stuff, that promises to add another layer to puzzles.

This represents astounding value, and with the other *Pirates* costumes that have been released should make fans squeal with delight. We're anticipating the fan fiction levels right now.

BLOOD, SWEAT AND GIBSON

Brand new mode for *Borderlands*



The undead groans have barely subdued on the *Zombie Island of Dr. Ned*, and 2K has just released the next chapter in the growing *Borderlands* saga: *Mad Moxxi's Underdome Riot*.

Considering there's a character called 'Mad Mel' in the main game, this riff on George Miller's 1985 sci fi flick *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* doesn't come as much of a surprise. What is surprising is that this is a brand new game mode that, to quote the ever excitable Randy Pitchford, is "an ENTIRELY NEW GAME MODE... It's like *Smash TV* in co-op FPS, but in the *Borderlands*". Review coming shortly!



ONLINE REVIEWS

BORDERLANDS DLC: THE ZOMBIE ISLAND OF DR. NED

It's Night of the Living Ned on Pandora

The *Zombie Island of Dr. Ned* is the first of, hopefully, loads of DLC for *Borderlands*. It doesn't interfere with the main game, so you can either play it as soon as you open up the Fast Travel Network or save it until after you finish going through the central story.

It's your call.

Once the DLC is installed you'll see a new location on the Fast Travel Network list: Jakob's Cove. Teleport there and the fun begins.

As the name suggests, Dr. Ned's island is crawling with zombies, were-skags, gunk-puking defilers and various other nasty beasts that need shooting.

The tone is a little jokier than the main game, with Dr. Ned obviously being the Dr. Zed model with a comical fake moustache. There are also amusing references to *Scooby Doo* and even a possessed Clap Trap.

It's not all in-jokes and pop culture references, however, there's a really solid, and different game here. The zombies are old school, George A. Romero-style meat

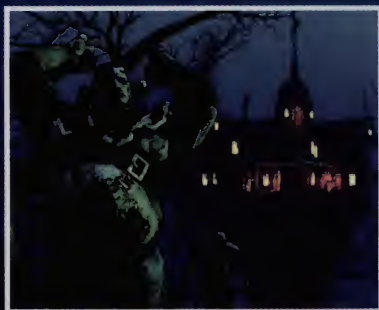
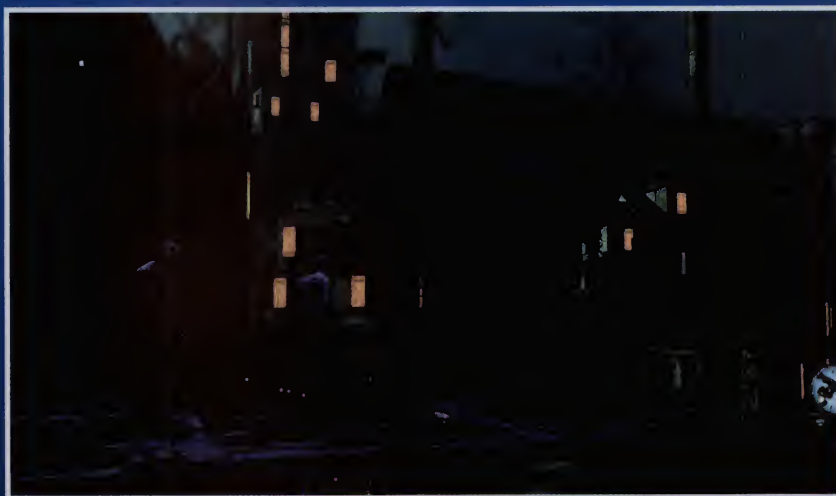
puppets. Slow and shambling, as opposed to, say, the sprinting crazies from the *Dawn of the Dead* remake.

These lumbering pus bags make up for their lack of speed with sheer numbers which can lead to some pretty hectic fights. While these battles are really great moments, the sheer number of characters on screen can cause momentary lag. It's not a deal breaker but it should be noted.

A rather nice touch is that the zombies, being reanimated corpses, are unaffected by caustic or shock-based weapons. They are, however, averse to explosive or incendiary attacks – which leads to some spectacularly bloody head shots. If you pull off a headshot the zombie's brain will pop out and can be collected.

INFO

GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$12.95



Although before you start collecting the brains make sure to activate the brain collecting mission with zombie T.K. He can be found in the bottom left hand corner of the Hallow's End map.

You see, until you activate his mission the head meats you pick up are worthless as they don't register.

Trust us on this one, we really did learn the hard way.

The "plot" is wafer thin, basically sending you on a series of quests and eventually to the source of the zombie scourge. This is not a long adventure, but it's fun while it lasts. It also gives you access to some new, cool weapons and some very memorable boss fights.

— Anthony O'Connor



VERDICT:

The whole package a little on the short side, but for just over \$12 this is well worth it. Also watching zombie T.K. eat brains and spew up weapons is just delightful.

INTERNET

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...



ONLINE REVIEWS

DJ HERO DLC

David Guetta & The Extended Mix packs



Since the game launched (which we loved, by the way) in October, the only DLC to hit is *The Extended Mix pack* and the *David Guetta pack*. They're both expensive for what you get. *The Extended Mix* is definitely the stronger of the two, being much more entertaining and involved. Freestyle Games pits 50 Cent's 'All of Me' feat Mary J. Blige against Queen's 'Radio Ga Ga'. It's very fast paced, and goes from being a solid, tricky mix that takes advantage of Fiddy's work to a technical test of concentration. You won't see it coming, and it demands more than 1000 button hits. Gorillaz's 'Dare' and Public

Enemy's 'Can't Truss It' back up the first track by proving to be an accomplishment when finished, and goes on like a marathon. Both of these run for roughly four and a half minutes.

David Guetta, a French DJ, has chops, but his triple pack, also mixed by Freestyle, is best left alone. There's only one track, 'Sexy Chick' featuring Will.I.Am and Apl.De.Ap that has a decent beat and doesn't act like a gimmicky New Year's Eve anthem. The prompts on screen match the music effectively, and it is entertaining. Pity, then, that the other two are pretty forgettable.

INFO

GENRE: MUSIC
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: FREESTYLE GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$9.95, \$12.95

VERDICT:

Go for the *Extended Mix Pack* if you're looking to expand your *DJ Hero* library, but be prepared to fork out a lot of coin for it.



THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

More blisters on more fingers

TEKKEN 6

Scrapping online

So, the patch has hit, which means that previously laggy matches should be relegated. Sometimes yes, sometimes not. We spent most of our time waiting to fight rather than actually fighting, and when a match did come up (based on connection speed over rank, and Asia as our region) we got, usually, a lowly '1' or '2' strength out of a possible '5'.

Still, persevere and the net code is better than when the game launched. The people we played against were either cheaper than yesterday's newspaper or blessed with meta-human skills. There's now masses of replays and ghost data though to keep you entertained, even if it's only to see the outlandish fashion available.

VERDICT:

A solid fighter hampered by your connection speed. There's only so many times you'll keep trying before giving up to play against a mate on the couch.

INFO

GENRE: FIGHTING
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: NBP
DEVELOPER: NAMCO
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$99.95



We've got blister's on our fingers. Since launch you can now pick up song track packs that include the remaining songs from *Abbey Road*, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and *Rubber Soul*.

Are they worth it? In the case of *Sgt. Pepper's*, most definitely – Harmonix has seen fit to release the original version of 'Within You Without You', which is sitar seventh heaven.

Abbey Road is worth it too, because it includes the famous 16-minute B-side medley.

Finally, *Rubber Soul* isn't just one of The Beatles' best albums. It's perhaps one of the greatest albums of all time. Score 'em all.

INFO

GENRE: MUSIC
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: HARMONIX
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: VARIES

VERDICT:

So many classics collected in one spot. Why are you even asking yourself if you should get these? Madness. Scoop up your wallet, blow off the dust, and score the now.



A woman with short dark hair and tattoos, wearing an orange top, is featured in the background. She has a large, colorful tattoo on her right shoulder and upper arm, and a smaller tattoo on her neck. The background is a deep blue with some faint, swirling patterns.

AUSTRALIAN **ink**

TATTOOS. STYLE. CULTURE.

**ISSUE 3
ON SALE NOW!**

INSIGHT

Tips and cheats



MODERN WARFARE 2

SPECIAL OPS GUIDE

Welcome to Part 2 of our guide for tackling the Special Ops mode in *Modern Warfare 2*. This is where things get serious, because the next three tiers are going to test you. Find a mate you can bring along for the ride and get stuck in. It'll be a tough slog, but the satisfaction makes it worth it. Besides, the more people who finish Special Ops the more likely Infinty Ward will be forced to provide more of these bite-sized challenges, right?

CHARLIE

Hidden (Stealth)

Completed on: Veteran

Swap your pistol for the MP5, dispense with the regular enemies and move into the sniper fields. The first section has three of them; one right in front by the crate, one beyond the destroyed tank, and the last is beyond the left of the tank and near a tree. In the next section you'll want to use the tank wreckage on your left (the one with the back blasted open is a good one to use). Pop up like a meerkat to target two snipers to your south/south west and eliminate them. The next guy is around to your right near that 'double tree', use the snap auto-aim of the MP5 to quickly bag and tag him. Have a buddy act as bait to lure out the last two snipers in the south/south west. One is placed randomly in the field, another is behind a ruined tank. Fight your way until you get to the church, but be prepared for a short alarm triggering in the backyard that is easily sorted with some cover in the church, some shrewd Claymore placement, and the MP5. Move into the houses beyond with your MP5 and murderize all the regular enemies until the 'scary music' stops. Your green smoke should be visible out the back window of the house, but there are snipers between you and your goal. They usually mill around the south to south west, just inch out of cover slowly and pick all three of them off. Robert's your mother's brother.

Breach & Clear (Slow-mo Breach)

Completed on: Veteran

Technically, the timer for this mission won't kick off until you actually place the breach charge, so do some investigating and swap your M1014 Shotgun for the Striker. Equip your M4A1, switch to the underslung grenade launcher, breach and obliterate the grouped enemies in one fell explosion. For the rest, have your buddy picking off the snipers on the second floor while you grenade the hell out of the six riot shield dudes. Once you create a suitable gap, melt their retinas with a whole bunch of flash bangs, inch forward, grab some shields and make a dash towards the finish line.

Time Trial (Timed Driving)

Completed on: Veteran

No walkthrough required here, really. To make things easy on yourself enlist the help of a mate, have him aim for achieving a fast time and finishing the level while you nab all of the flags to keep the process moving forward. Or you could make *him* be Altair on a snowmobile and collect all the stupid flags while you go break the land speed record instead. Yeah, do that instead. Failing that, it's quite possible to tackle it yourself. Just remember, jumps slow you down, and you don't need to grab every flag on the way down the hill if you have enough time. Stick to the right.

Homeland Security (Wave Defence)

Completed on: Veteran

The best two places to sit tight are inside the banking building conference room (each player covers the two doorways, plus turrets), and the alleyway behind the diner and gas station (claymores covering any window entries, turrets pouring lead into the rear exit of the diner). Note that you can actually make the enemy Predator drone work for you; pop out of cover to get its attention and then hide again, the mental decathlete controlling it will usually kill his own troops. Nice teamwork there, Chuck.

Snatch & Grab (Assault)

Completed on: Veteran

We found that moving left and hiding in some plane wreckage offered the best spot for a sniping position. Although it is tempting to blast everyone to kingdom come with the Intervention sniper rifle, we recommend saving its ammo for the Juggernauts (you'll know when they're out and about, thanks to some ominous music). A better alternative is to scoop up the ACOG M240 that your enemies seem so fond of, and bust chops with that instead. Use cover and thermal sights, snipe for the juggernaut face, and this particular 'challenge' won't be.

INSIGHT

Tips and cheats

DELTA

Wardriving (Assault and Defend)

Completed on: Veteran

Eliminate everyone between you and the very last house. Move carefully through this house and get down to the bottom floor. Proceed to lace every entrance to the house with claymore mines and hide behind some cover (the counter is quite good for this) and let the mines and the turrets mop most of the attackers up. Continue using this strategy for the other houses and remember to pack the Stryker and to lug the turrets along with you. The final house can be a bit of a bitch as you have little to no cover to rely on.

Wreckage (Vehicle Killspree)

Completed on: Veteran

Fight through until the bridge is clear, then go back and explode the vehicles. Meh.

Acceptable Losses (Stealth)

Completed on: Veteran

Remember kids, the AA12 with the heartbeat sensor is your best friend. Pop the first group of guys and head towards a jeep towards the north west. Eliminate the guys guarding it and whack some explosives on the chopper. Be very mindful of the truck seagulling around, and head east to a small building that houses two guards. Once they have met their maker move northwards and ninja stab the two patrolling guards in the back. Your heartbeat sensor should pickup two blips to your north east, avoid or cap them and hug the eastern edge of the level towards your nearest objective. When you happen across the tanker truck you need to stop and wait for the nearby 'blips' to separate a bit. Shoot these two patrolling annoyances when they shamle into view. Plant the C4

on the MiG and make a beeline towards your next objective and a group of buildings. The western-most building is the one you want, hide behind some crates and proceed to dispense with the two two-man patrols that will wander past that location. Thread your way through the remaining patrols until you come across a guy smoking against a building. Ironically smoke him and then scoot around the corner of the building to take out two more guys. Go inside the building, drop off the bomb and exit through the rear of the building and move around to the west side of it. Done and done.

Terminal (Assault)

Completed on: Veteran

As soon as the mission kicks off you'll want to make a tactical retreat down some stairs to your rear. Take down anybody who comes after you and snatch up a shield from one of them when you can. One player needs to act as 'team human shield' to lure enemies down, while the other takes cover behind and becomes 'team face perforation'. When the flow of idiots stops you'll need to move to where the glass elevators are and use your lure tactics there as well. It's a pretty good theory as there is only one way to come at you and you can see all approaching hostiles through the bulletproof glass. After much claret-letting you'll soon spot a sizeable group of shield users approaching, use grenade launchers on them followed by regular grenades and flashbangs. Once they're wasted just bait and blast like you did before until you're the only men standing.

Estate Takedown (Elimination)

Completed on: Veteran

Hide in the nearby boat with your sniper rifle and pick off baddies until the 'juggernaut

music' kicks in. Locate him quickly through your scope and eliminate him. Pick off a few more guys and move to the large house. Walk in and drop two claymores at that entrance, two at the nearby staircase, and two at the alternate entrance across the hall. Move upstairs and blast the four or so enemies there and slap down another claymore by the front door. Move up some more stairs and into the bedroom on your left, strap this door with a claymore too. Sit tight in this room and snipe as many enemies as you can. Once the juggernaut music starts move to the top of the stairs and hammer him with sniper rounds as he tries to come up. The final five guys are ghillie-suited snipers that can be picked off through the downstairs living room windows.





ECHO

Network (Assault)

Completed on: Veteran

It may seem useless at the start of the mission, but that AT-4 will save your arse later on, so grab it. Breach, cap the hostage kicking guy first, and then the other two. Without delay start planting claymores out by the gate and pitch a few 'nades in there for good measure. Sit back and blast any remaining riffraff that comes through. Head up slowly and stick to the left behind the fuel tanks and the pillars. Make a break for some nearby stairs and position yourself underneath to start a pure massacre of troops who aren't intelligent enough to fire through the steps. Cruise on upstairs, trigger some more enemies and time a shot at the nearby fuel tank to sort most of them out. Be on the lookout for rappelling enemies on your left, just use cover and the snap auto-aim to deal with them. Once the whirly-bird appears move back to your safe haven under the stairs and deal out the death all over again. When an opportunity presents itself, jack-in-the-box and introduce the helicopter to Mr. AT-4. We think they'll really hit it off together. With the chopper and the soldiers killed, it's time to trigger another attack. Move carefully

upstairs and into the room on your right to start the onslaught. Tactically retreat to some nearby barrels (or under the staircase again) and pick them off. Once they're toast move into that same room on the right and line it with claymores (to make sure you don't get flanked), move forward, trigger another attack, and use your cowardly-yet-awesome fallback tactics again. When they're pushing up daisies, scoop up a F2000 Thermal on a nearby crate and head up a new set of stairs. Wait until you hear a smoke canister go off and then run back to a more defensible position that will give you a direct view of the stairs. Butcher your would-be attackers and move upstairs again with your thermal rifle. There are five or so baddies sniping from windows here, pop them all and head to the breaching area to the left. Don't breach yet, you'll have a couple of spawning stragglers to kill, so be ready for them. Once they're down, equip any underpowered SMG you can find (to prevent armour piercing a shot into the C4 barrels), breach the door farthest from the stairs and kill all inside.

High Explosive (Elimination)


Completed on: Veteran

Welcome, ladies and gents, to the most ball-

busting mission in Spec Ops. You're back in the favelas of Rio, up against 10 juggernauts. It's only hard if you play by the rules though. We recommend running through the starting shanty level like you would if you were playing single-player until you come across some stairs that tell you to 'Turn back and continue the mission'. Ignore the warning, walk up the stairs and take an immediate right into an alley. The trick is to lure all the juggernauts up the stairs where you can splash damage them until they die. Rinse and repeat for all 10 of them and remember to restock your ammo before you lure the next one.

Armour Piercing (Elimination)

Completed on: Veteran

They say oil rigs can be lonely, lonely places. No such luck here. To make sure you have something to do Infinity Ward decided to include some friends to play with... 15 juggernauts. Don't crap yourself yet though, this challenge happens to be quite a bit easier than High Explosive – once you know how to rort the system. The trick here is to take up a defensible position upstairs and have the juggernauts come to you. You and your sniper rifle, that is. Keep a .50 cal handy too if they get in too close. 

INSIGHT

Tips and cheats

MODERN WARFARE 2 MULTIPLAYER SURVIVAL GUIDE

Unless you're hidden well (and have the Perks to keep it that way) you'll want to stay in motion. Stay still for too long and somebody WILL get the better of you – or drop a Killstreak on your head.

A Supply Drop can be the a surprisingly devastating Killstreak. Call one in and wait for the other team or your opponents to go for it and pick them off.

Riot shields really don't have a place in free-for-all games, but they're excellent tools for team games. One player can distract enemies with the shield and absorb all the punishment while the others hang back and plug people preoccupied with the shield carrier.

Choose the right class for the map. Your custom sniper class isn't going to be much chop in a tiny map. Be flexible.

Shoot down a Pavelow helicopter faster by not locking on with the AT-4 (anti-tank weapon). Shooting from the hip prevents the Pavelow from using countermeasures.

Aim for the chest or neck region and loose four to five rounds. Doing this will make the muzzle climb for recoil and should give you a headshot.

Sticking a Semtex charge to an enemy holding a riot shield is a good way to take them out from the front without having to flank them.

Equip a Stinger as your secondary weapon and watch for enemy aircraft. Your Stinger can lock onto them and quickly destroy them.

Use everything. Equipment, attachments, secondary weapons, everything. When you die and respawn, it will all be replenished. Don't ration your supplies.

RECOMMENDED CUSTOM CLASSES

#1

Primary: Intervention (with silencer and thermal. Take care of reduced stopping power using a silencer)

Secondary: AA-12 Shotgun (for massive and instant stopping power should somebody happen upon your hideout)

Equipment: Tactical Insertion (drop it near your perch, that way you can always return quickly when you're killed, and likely kill the guy who just got you while you're at it)

Special grenade: Smoke (you'll be able to see through it using thermal)

Perk 1

Bling (for two attachments, silencer and thermal)

Perk 2

Cold Blooded (for invisibility to thermal and enemy killstreaks)

Perk 3: Scrambler (disrupt enemy radar)

Deathstreak: Copycat (counter intel on anyone who keeps raiding your lair)

#2

Primary: Your preferred assault rifle

Secondary: Your preferred pistol

Equipment:

Throwing Knife (one hit kill if you nail it)

Special grenade:

Flashbang (blind enemies for easy liquidation)

Perk 1:

Marathon (unlimited sprint)

Perk 2:

Lightweight (increased run speed, get into enemy territory quickly)

Perk 3:

Commando (longer melee range, you're going to be up close and personal)

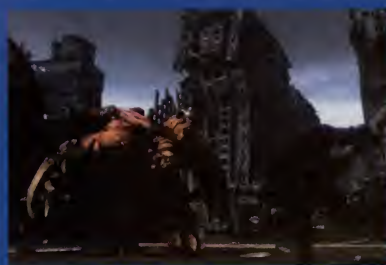
Deathstreak:

Final Stand (have a chance to take out enemies as you die. You're going to die a lot)



TROPHY HUNTER

Looking for gold, silver, and bronze in your favourite titles? Here are three to grab in *Darksiders*



RIVER OF BLOOD

One of the coolest Trophies we've yet come across. In order to score this you'll need to spill 3000 gallons of demon blood. Sure, it takes a while – but think how badass it'll look on your resume! Work experience: none, UAI: Below 30, Bane of Satan: Yes. Who wouldn't hire you?

7 THINGS TO DO IN... DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

There's plenty of fun to had in the deep world of *Dragon Age: Origins*. Here are a few things you shouldn't miss!



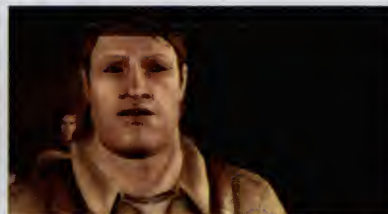
1 NAIL EVERYONE

One of the best things about any BioWare RPG is the way you can woo yourself into some pantaloons-down action. Yes, woo. If you're a male character you can knock boots with Morrigan, if you're female you can seduce Alistair. Zevran and Leliana will swing any which way (and even hit up a three-way with Isabella). Awesome!



2 ANNOY ANTI-FUR ACTIVISTS

Get the blacksmith in Denerim to make you three sets of armour, two of which will use 3x Drake Scales, and the other with a Dragon Scale. The first two sets are leather armour, and the third is your choice of medium, heavy, or massive. Get these scales during the "Urn Of Sacred Ashes" quest.



3 GLITCH TO BECOME ONE RICH BITCH

Go to your inventory. Move any expensive item into your Junk area with the **A** button. Go to a vendor. Highlight the newly junked item in your Junk Inventory. VERY quickly press the **A** button (to sell all) followed immediately by the **X** button. You'll have more gold now. Buyback the items, rinse, repeat.

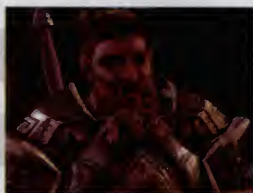
4 SCORE A WICKED SWORD

Legendary weapons are legendary. That's science talking. Ageless is a two-handed sword that is found when you step on three triggers in the Dwarf Throne room, using the Hold Position command. Once you trigger all pressure plates you must then clobber a dragon to make him cough it up. Wipe it down before you use it, yeah?



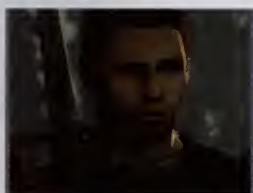
5 MAKE LASSIE WORK FOR YOU

Your Mabari dog (which you should have named 'Barkspawn') can be asked 'Do you see anything interesting?' in various locations in the game. In most areas he'll have a random chance to return with either a minor item such as an Elfroot or a limited number of unique items. There's only one item that is unique to a specific area. There's a good boy. Who's a good boy?



6 ENJOY A FUNNY EASTER EGG

If you choose to back Harrowmont as Dwarven King, Bhelen becomes furious during the coronation and lashes out. After Bhelen is slain, a street crier will say: "News of the hour! Prince Bhelen lashes out during the coronation of King Harrowmont and is ignominiously slain. Epic FAIL!" Gold, Jerry.



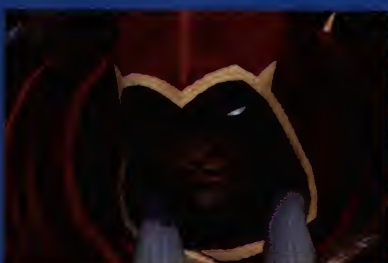
7 ORDER A SAUCER OF MILK FOR TABLE TWO

Alistair and Morrigan get along about as well as a cat and a vacuum cleaner. Have them both equipped as party members any chance you get. Morrigan is a first-class sniper and Alistair is a quadruple ultimate grandshaman at sarcasm. Hilarious stuff.



SLAYER

Kill 666 Demons? Okay, okay. **THIS** is the coolest trophy ever. Not only can you slap this on a resume to get a corporate leg up, but you can mention it out of context at a dinner party with overly-religious acquaintances. Conversation starter: confirmed.



OPEN AIR PARKING

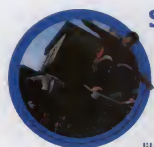
As you've probably guessed, the apocalypse is where the game begins and where the shit hits the fan. But what you may not of known is that it's also the time when cars hit the helicopters. Scoop one up and smash a whirly-bird today!

INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

WANTED

Incoming hits



SKATE 3

This will rule our lives for quite some time we imagine. It's being described (by us, now) as *Skate* meets *Test Drive: Unlimited*. Kind of like the MMO of skating. Hop online with a crew, skate around and throwdown challenges. We're sure there's more to it than that though – we're just waiting for EA to flip a preview version in our direction.



DANTE'S INFERNO

Yes, it has lifted so much from the *God of War* series it's not funny, but being similar to greatness is not really a bad thing, is it? When's the last time you heard a bloke complain his girlfriend looked too much like Scarlett Johansson? If we tell you to go to Hell don't take it the wrong way – just play this game.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

This could be the game of 2010 at this rate. The more we see of this game the more ridiculously excited we get. *Red Dead Redemption* just looks too good to be true. The level of detail and life in the huge world Rockstar San Diego is creating looks face-slappingly incredible. Bring on April 30!



DEAD RISING 2

With the Xbox 360/PC title *Left 4 Dead 2* (the uncensored version, at least) currently outlawed from being sold down under (on account of all the zombie guts and stuff), we're a little concerned *Dead Rising 2* could fall victim to the same problem (on account of all the zombie guts and stuff). We'll find out soon.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

We're all looking forward to this one, although Adam is more than a little pissed the entire cast of *Final Fight* EXCEPT Mike Haggar seems to be featuring. What's with that anyway? Has Capcom forgotten about Mayor Mike? Shame, Capcom – for shame! Prepare for a piledriving!



MODNATION RACERS

The prospect of making our own tracks is getting us all a quiver. What first? We're thinking of bashing together a cartoon ode to Oran Park, considering they're going to be tearing it down this year. We're assuming you have some ideas too – let us know. And no, no giant penises, before you ask.

SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the best



ADVENTURE

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTAIV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16

10

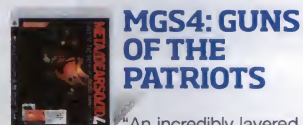


ASSASSIN'S CREED II

"A far more compelling story than the revolutionary original, there's more to see and do, and more ways of dealing death than before. Ubisoft has tweaked the climbing mechanic to make it feel part puzzler, but all action."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1

9



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. One of the best games available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely one of the top exclusives. Buy and play this videogame now. Seriously."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners PLAYERS: 1-16

10



UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

"Easily the best PS3 exclusive to date, *Uncharted 2* combines genre-defining visuals, high adventure and cinematic intensity like nothing before. Don't miss the original either. Get both, this second."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-12

10



BAYONETTA

"It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy, and weird. It takes skill to make it so well, and it takes a Japanese mindset to make it so freakishly perverted. Smooth and stylish: the ultimate evolution of *Devil May Cry* style action."

DEVELOPER: Platinum Games PUBLISHER: Sega PLAYERS: 1

9



DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

"The good utterly outweighs the bad. It's daunting, but with such masterful storytelling, memorable characters and addictive adventuring, every hour invested is paid back double. Plus, BioWare swapped 'morality meters' for shagging."

DEVELOPER: BioWare PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1

9



BRÜTAL LEGEND

"A hilarious and engaging story in an amazing heavy metal world. The funniest game of 2009, with an absolutely killer soundtrack to boot. If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it is settled: Tim Schafer is God. A true must-play."

DEVELOPER: Double Fine PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-4

9



FALLOUT 3

"Taking the solid base of *Oblivion* and placing it into a post apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea – and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly. This is a game that will astound you with the sheer depth and enormity of its incredible vision."

DEVELOPER: Bethesda PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1

9

SHOOTER



THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

"Worth your sweat. The combination of two campaigns equals a respectable 20+ hours of gameplay."

DEVELOPER: Starbreeze Studios
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-12

8

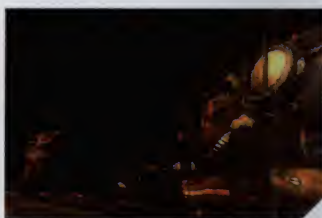


KILLZONE 2

"Visually *Killzone 2* runs through the competition like a bull in the proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. *Killzone 2* is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



BIOSHOCK

"As a sub-par port, minus the promised extra content, *BioShock* is a disappointment. BUT you'd be silly to miss out on what is undoubtedly one of the landmark games of this generation so far. In many ways, this is a must play."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin
PUBLISHER: 2K
PLAYERS: 1

8



MODERN WARFARE 2

"It's almost like three games in one, stuffed with moments that will leave you shocked and breathless with excitement. Superbly crafted, *MW2* is, with its older brother, a pinnacle of this generation's games."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward **PUBLISHER:** Activision **PLAYERS:** 1-18

10



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

"It's not an FPS, but shooting is all you do – in the skies above Europe. Head-turning attention to detail and intense action. Awesome, actually."

DEVELOPER: Gaijin
Entertainment **PUBLISHER:** AIE **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



BORDERLANDS

"*Borderlands* starts out great and only gets better from there. It takes the best elements of RPGs and shooters and fuses them, and it's quite simply the most rewarding co-op to date."

DEVELOPER: Gearbox
Software **PUBLISHER:** 2K
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

"Superior in many ways to even *Modern Warfare*, this is a surprisingly superlative piece of software. Powerful, well-produced, stuffed with violence – it's fantastic. The action is relentless, the visuals buttery-smooth, the intensity savage – we love it."

DEVELOPER: Treyarch
PUBLISHER: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



GHOSTBUSTERS

"Well-honed and accessible controls, some spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits combined with the *Ghostbusters* universe and come together for a thoroughly addictive experience."

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



FAR CRY 2

"At times overstressing itself, *Far Cry 2*'s breath-taking ambition can often be its undoing, but it's still one of the best shooters out there. Plus, setting stuff on fire is still a ridiculous amount of fun."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1-16

8

TOP 5

GAMING'S TOUGHEST DECISIONS



NUKE IT OR NOT?

Fallout 3 puts the fate of the first city – and everyone you just met in it – as soon as you leave the Vault. Do you defuse the nuke in Megaton, or do you blast the town off the map?



HARVEST OR SAVE?

Coming across a helpless Little Sister in *BioShock* you'll be asked whether you want to harvest or save her. By the end, the correct choice is clear. Do the right thing!



WAYNE OR PLAYBOY?

Wayne is a drag, but seriously, Playboy had to go. Kill Playboy and you get his apartment and on-demand backup from Wayne. Kill Wayne and you get nothing but guilt.



SAVE THE VILLAGE OR YOUR MATES?

Whichever faction eventually wins out in *Far Cry 2*, they'll want to dispose of all witnesses including you, your mercenary friends and a village full of innocent locals. You have to choose who to save.



KILL LAMBERT OR DON'T KILL LAMBERT

Splinter Cell: Double Agent ends with an interesting predicament. Sam must kill his boss to prove his loyalty to some terrorists, or blow his cover completely but shooting someone else.

INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

MAGIC MOMENTS



GAME: Mercenaries 2:
World in Flames
CONSOLE: PS3
YEAR: 2008

THE MOMENT:

The world of *Mercenaries* is nothing if not multicultural. You battle the Chinese, Russians, Rastas and Venezuelans. There's a Brit with a Chinese background, Jennifer Mui. A fluent Korean-speaking American Chris Jacobs who has, presumably, African heritage. Mad Swede Mattias Nilsson rounds out the selectable characters. Your support team includes a Mexican mechanic, Eva Navarro, the perpetually sozzled Russian bomber pilot Misha Milanich, Ewan Devlin, an Irish chopper pilot, and Fiona Taylor, who provides operational support. Her accent, though, was slightly baffling.

She sounded Australian, but it had a bit of South African, maybe Canadian. It didn't matter, but it DID matter – like a niggling feeling that you've forgotten something, or you think your hair's out of place when it isn't. Nothing really gave her origins away. Still, this melting pot meant that the Americans weren't the only ones pillaging an oil-rich nation: everyone wanted to get a piece of a country where roughly 30 per cent of the population live on \$2 a day.

Tensions, then, are high even when you are armed to the teeth with rocket launchers, machine guns and battle-choppers. Fiona was always there, in your ear and back at base to offer advice, direction and urgency. Even though the chaos become more frequent, the explosions larger – you do get to let off a nuclear bomb – she was always cheerfully ready.

That is, until your base is under attack. Or rather, she's under attack. It doesn't matter really, as you needed to get back to HQ, pronto – and in a chopper that attracted missiles like a booth babe attracts salivating dorks. As you're careening above the country side Fiona comes yelling across the airwaves: "Where the bloody hell are you?!" It didn't need Lara Bingle to step out of Fingal Spit to make the point more blatantly obvious. A moment that was unexpected, hilarious and satisfying. Onya, Straya.



RACING



PURE

"*Pure* shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock **PUBLISHER:** Madman **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8

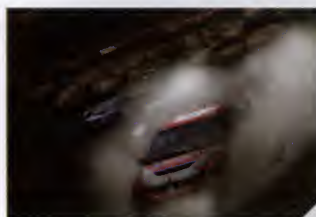


COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"*DIRT 2* is snazzy, but it's too boneheaded for its own good, has few real rally cars and very little proper rallying. The original *DIRT* remains a far better example of a next gen rally game. More varied and far less US-centric."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



SEGA RALLY

"To appreciate *Sega Rally* you'll have to continually remind yourself that it's a deceptively life-like caricature of a hardcore rallying experience. Not brain surgery, but it delivers the fun in big muddy spades."

DEVELOPER: Sega Driving Studio
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1-6

9



RACE DRIVER GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of *V8 Supercars* and *Colin McRae: DiRT* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its roots though, and the *V8* DLC Codies promised has vanished."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-12

9



NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

"*SHIFT* bucks the trend of all-American games, and treats you as an intelligent racer. Whether you want to get under the bonnet and tinker, or even just race with what you're given, this truly is a must-have package. It's also damn pretty and very, very noisy."

DEVELOPER: Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND

"A triumph. Harmonix has found the formula for a truly great music game – immaculate presentation, great tunes and a job for as many of your friends as possible. You wanted the best, you got the best."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-4

10



THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

"From the tunes to screaming hordes of women to psychedelic trips through acid-fuelled imaginations, Harmonix nailed it all. A landmark collaboration."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-4

9



SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, *SKATE 2* is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime. Massively addictive."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 10

"With its new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 was the year that the *FIFA* franchise managed to leap the perennial hurdle that is *Pro Evolution Soccer*. *FIFA 10* is even better. Buy it, become obsessed."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-20

9



STREET FIGHTER IV

"Capcom has been in the virtual brawling business longer than anyone, and with its vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay, *SFIV* is worth paying double for. Acquire on sight."

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

10



UFC 2009 UNDISPUTED

"It was trumped by *Fight Night Round 4*, but it's taken the arrival of *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010* to remind us just how tight *UFC 2009* really is. A technical, rewarding fighter that looks bloody unreal."

DEVELOPER: Yuke's DISTRIBUTOR: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

8



GUITAR HERO METALLICA

"*Guitar Hero Metallica* improves upon *GHWT* in a number of ways – a more user-friendly HUD, superior presentation and more attention to detail. Great tracklist too, including 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft DISTRIBUTOR: Activision PLAYERS: 1-4

8

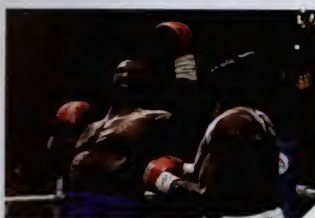


FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

"A spectacular game. Deeper and more technical, *Fight Night Round 4* recreates the sweet science more faithfully than ever before. Remarkable detail, incredible animation."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-2

9



TOP 5

VIDEOGAMING MYTHS BUSTED



THE EA SPORTS GUY

We've mentioned this before, but it's not getting through. The guy who says, "EA Sports: It's in the game" is not David Hayter, voice of Solid Snake. His name is Andrew Anthony. Capital E, capital A, capital SPORTS. Say it with us.



THE IRAQI PS2 SUPERCOMPUTER

Saddam did not buy 4000 PS2s to build a maniacal supercomputer. Legitimate PCs with far more processing power were as common in Iraq as anywhere else in the world in the year 2000. Flat out myth.



METAL GEAR SYPHON

Don't listen to morons, *Syphon Filter* was not a *MGS* rip-off. *MGS* came out September 1998 (Japan). *Syphon Filter* came out February 1999 (US). Think they made it in four months?



GRAND THEFT BIGFOOT

Come on people, it's been over five years. There's no Bigfoot, seriously. He's like the Lara Croft nude code. He just doesn't exist. That's it.



VIDEOGAMES CREATE KILLERS

Did you read Angry Sackboy's far bigger than usual rant on page 24? You should. It's educational. Fact is, there's no evidence to support this theory. It's bunk.

INHOUSE

The names behind the games!

WICKED WITCH

Mixing business with pleasure?
Diabolical!

Daniel Visser may be a big shot entrepreneur nowadays, responsible for the livelihoods of dozens of men, but his operation started out like many fringe-dwelling modders and coders around the world – Dan started out as a 'Bedroom Banger.'

"The studio was formed by myself in my study last millennium, around 1999. It slowly grew to just a small group of guys and remained like that for quite some time." Building on the experience they'd gained working at Torus, Melbourne House, and elsewhere, this nucleus of staff slowly grew. "In recent times we have expanded our operations and are now delivering multiple console games each year."

Informal, friendly, and frequently chaotic, living the dream at Wicked Witch has condensed every cliché of independent games development into a decade-long blur. As Dan puts it, he and his team have had more than their fair share of 'crazy antics.'

"These days it seems somewhat more tame and even more professional, but back in the day I think we had some pretty wild times both in the traditional sense, and in the nerdy sense of course! For example, we subscribe to having Nerf weapons around the office in the gaming tradition, and pinball machines and classic arcades used to fill half the office. Late nights and a large car park, crossed with celebratory kegs of beer in the middle of the office, has led to some three day benders over the years! I remember *Quake* servers for long lunches, 48 hour battlefield sessions, and when we just could not help playing *World of Warcraft* the entire first

week it came out – ah, good times!"

It would be a mistake to confuse some healthy downtime with a lackadaisical attitude, however. Dan describes his time working on PlayStation hardware as inspiring, and takes every opportunity to fine-tune his development environment. "Working on PlayStation is an unique experience. We have expanded our own game engine to feature various virtual layers that then map to the PlayStation hardware to take advantage of its power in as many places as possible."

Looking ahead, Wicked Witch is experimenting with new techniques like Agile Development, keeping its dev teams lean, and as creative as possible. "Our design philosophy is usually to make the best game possible within the timeframe, and this is definitely always the main challenge! We often discuss and design features in a group and let everyone have input and make a case for the features they like, although it can get heated, and you can't please all of the people all of the time..."

If you're keen to make your future at Wicked Witch, there are entry-level openings from time to time. Dan reminds any potential acolytes that game development isn't just a career – it's a calling. "We usually look for uni graduates for new guys, a sense of humour certainly helps, however in the end passion and dedication are the most important!" **James Cottee**



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"I think originally we were going to name ourselves 'Wizards of Oz.' We thought that was clever, but I believe we found out many businesses in Australia had already used the name! So as a reference to that and being located in the east of Melbourne, we thought we might be the Wicked Witch of the East instead... even though she kind of dies." **Dan Visser**

INFO

FOUNDED: 1999

LOCATION: BAYSWATER, EAST MELBOURNE

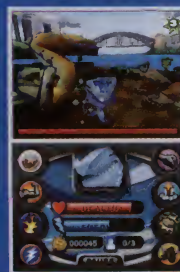
KEY STAFF: DANIEL VISSER, FOUNDER, CEO, AND MANAGING DIRECTOR
SHANNON TROTTMAN, LEAD ARTIST
SHAYNE FORD, PROGRAMMING LEAD
WAYNE SIMMONS, PROGRAMMING LEAD
COLIN VISSER, CFO

WEBSITE: WWW.WICKED-WITCH.COM.AU

FOOTY LEGENDS

In addition to working on licensed material, like *Jumper*, *Space Chimps*, and *James Cameron's Aliens*, Wicked Witch has also forged ahead with their own projects, including sports games made by Aussies, for Aussies.

Other Wicked Witch projects include ambitious mobile phone MMOs, designed for the highly competitive Korean market.



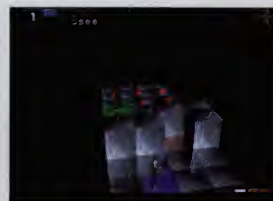
Rugby League Challenge

AFL Challenge

INFAMOUS

Kurushi

God gave blocks that roll to you, gave blocks that roll to you...



Get your blocks off!



1997

KURUSHI

The test begins... now



INFO

CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION
GENRE: PUZZLE
DEVELOPER: SONY
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$20 - \$40 (EBAY)

Having a sense of scale is important to your fight or flight response. That's usually how the food chain works. Something smaller than you can generally be conquered; something larger is to be approached with caution. It will probably kill you. Humans seem to float somewhere near the top, along with great white sharks, tigers and in the case of *Kurushi*, giant rolling blocks.

The primal fear they generate and dance you engage in to control them for survival (and eventual victory) doesn't just stem from their gargantuan size. These blocks advance in groups, at least four at a time and sometimes 90-plus, eerily booming along, powered by an undisclosed cosmic force. The hand of God, perhaps, as a mystery presence congratulates and commands you either with a resounding

“...a rare combination of twitch gameplay tactics and muscle memory”

'Perfect!' or 'Again!' should the masses be dispatched or crush your character.

The location of this cubist horror show is the blocks themselves, a levitating, dense cluster that the rolling cubes emerge from. The background a blank, deep nothingness. Its soundtrack a shimmering, ethereal orchestral

score with a touch of synthesiser to punctuate the end of a stage. Your character is the only organic part of this exercise, able to be flattened (temporarily) should he come too close to the perpetually moving shapes before they disappear off the edge of the platform as he laid his single square 'trap'. He could also fall in to the abyss if you were unable to survive the waves in each stage and the platform eventually shrank. There were blocks that would destroy others, some that couldn't be destroyed and thus left to their natural cycle of self-destruction.

Kurushi demanded a rare combination of twitch gameplay tactics and muscle memory, requiring the player to memorise the individual patterns whilst also manoeuvring deftly between the cracks that would open up. In a way it was a puzzle equivalent of something like *The Club*, where racking up multipliers as efficiently as possible increased the score. The atmosphere – an unfriendly but highly polished score, stark graphics that ran smoothly – hardly encourages

a cosy environment to do this in, so it was always a tense game. A plain background means that all your attention is focused on your man, where sometimes you're in control, sometimes you're skittish, and other times just trying to stay alive.

Your performance throughout the game

dictated your final 'IQ' score. It was a purposely uncomfortable tug between aiming for perfection and realising that your physical presence hindered its execution, and that no matter how objective you try to be, subjectivity always influences the final outcome.

Despite a sequel, we presume *Kurushi* left too many people cold as like the cubes in the game it's disappeared in to nothingness. Another perfect candidate for the PSN though, should some Sony kingpin dig it out for release one day. **Paul Taylor**



BONUS ROUND

So you want more *Kurushi*? Once you made it through the single-player version of *Kurushi*, a level editor opened up so you could devise your own fiendish layouts, as well as a bonus character that somehow fitted in to the story (though no cut scenes explained it). Beyond that, you'll have to move to Japan, where a third game was released on PS2 – *Intelligent Qube Remix Plus* – and also a compilation on PSP, *IQ Mania*.

NEXTISSUE

REVIEWS

Army of Two:
The 40th Day

Dark Void

Battlefield: Bad Company 2

Heavy Rain

MAG

Dante's Inferno

BlazBlue Calamity Trigger

BioShock 2

Yakuza 3

Super Street Fighter IV

Vancouver 2010

Star Ocean The Last
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White Knight Chronicles

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